EDGAR WIND

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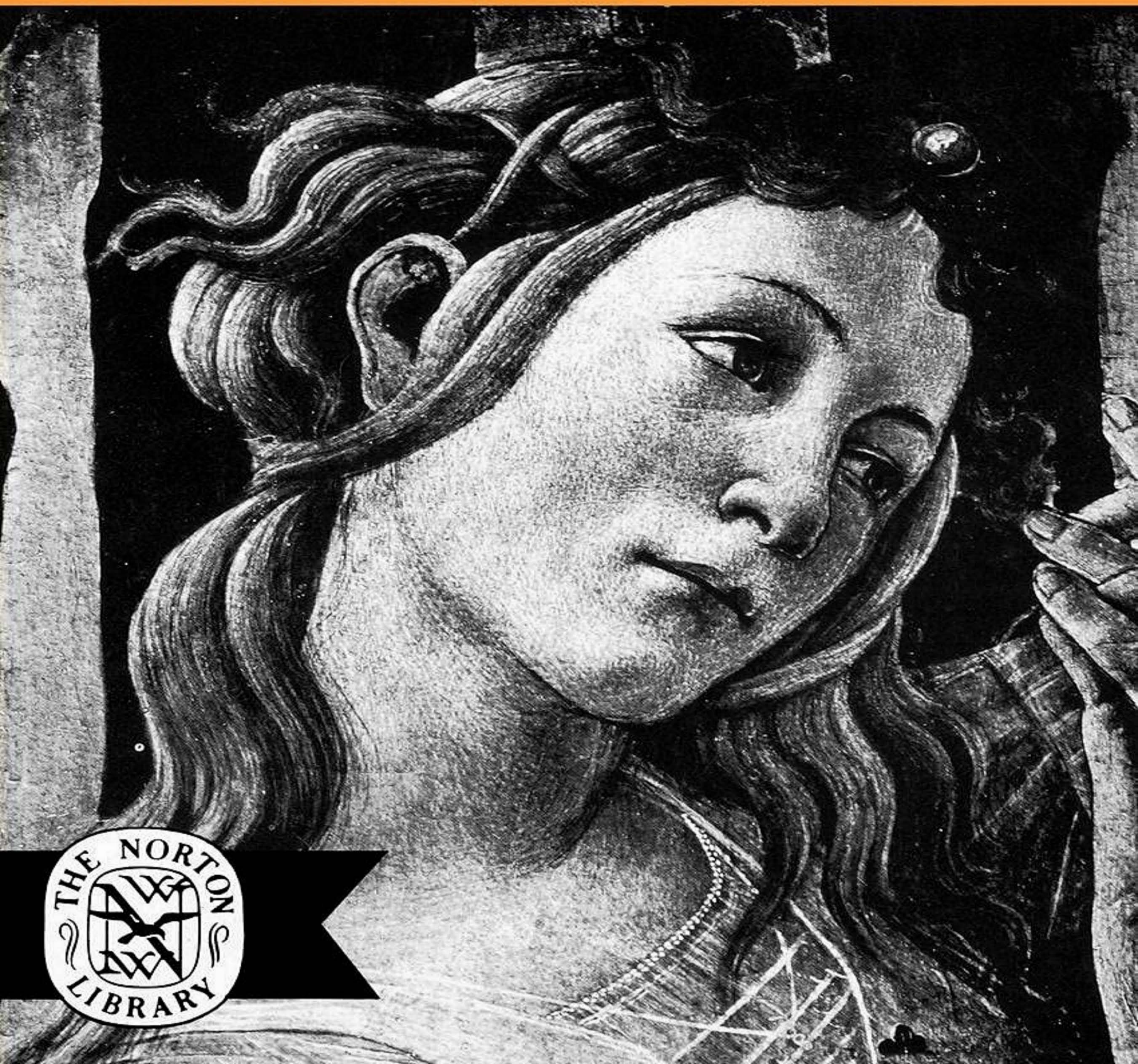
Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance

revised and enlarged edition

An exploration of philosophical and mystical sources of iconography in Renaissance art



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PAGAN MYSTERIES IN THE RENAISSANCE

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by

EDGAR WIND

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ONULP

To
MAURICE BOWRA

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PREFACE

The observations contained in this book have occupied me for many years, but I have hesitated to put them into print because of certain well-known difficulties which attend the study of iconography. The reading of a picture in the light of a text may easily destroy both text and picture. To maintain between them the critical distance at which each brings out the latent qualities of the other requires a skill of exposition which I cannot hope to master, and particularly not in a foreign language. To make matters worse, any thorough study of mysteries inevitably leads through stretches of waste land. The stubborn pedantry of Renaissance mystagogues, which I have made no attempt to belittle, cannot but enter to a certain extent into a presentation of their thoughts which aims at exactness. If some of the arguments in Chapters II, III and IV should strike the reader as unduly crabbed, I can only plead that I share his misgivings; but the later chapters would lose part of their meaning if the more poetic subjects they try to elucidate were not seen as rooted in a hard didacticism, of which they are the unexpected bloom.

The footnotes, of considerable number and length, are indispensable as foundations of the argument but superfluous for understanding it. The reader can easily ignore them if he chooses: but if I may quote Mr. W. S. Lewis, to whom I am indebted for much encouragement, 'a book of this character is rubbish without them'.

To be properly treated the revival of pagan mysteries in the Renaissance would require an author trained in several disciplines, each of which would demand of him the exertions of a lifetime. In facing the impossible it is perhaps wise to take risks: I only hope the reader will not find that I have taken too many. I would hardly have dared to cross so many borders, had I not been encouraged by men of great learning who know their fields far more intimately than I do. From the beginning my archaeological transgressions were watched with a friendly and critical eye by Frank Brown, my excursions into Elizabethan literature by Herbert Davis; and in venturing forth into the labyrinthine by-ways of Renaissance mysticism, I enjoyed the generous support and guidance of Paul Oskar Kristeller, who read the manuscript. I also owe much to conversations with Delio Cantimori and with Raymond Klibansky. In writing the chapter on 'the Graces' I benefited by the erudition of Dietrich von Bothmer. And I owe a quite particular debt to the enduring friendship of Frederick Mortimer Clapp, the late director of the Frick Collection, who has been singularly clear-sighted in his judgment

on the chances and pitfalls of the present study. Nor can I forget that in tracing some remote Renaissance texts at the Houghton Library, my labours were immeasurably lightened by the bibliographical omniscience of Arnold Weinberger.

In Oxford I have found two inspiring mentors in Eduard Fraenkel and John Sparrow. They were so selfless as to read the complete text in page proof, from which they removed many blemishes both in argument and style. I much regret that the wealth of observation by which they enriched my understanding of the subject can be communicated to the reader only in part. But in reflecting on the imperfections which the book retains, I must acknowledge the great forbearance and patience of my publishers who have borne far more than their customary share of tribulations.

In the correction of the proofs I was very kindly assisted by David Wilson and Anthony Wood. Perhaps I should add that in the spelling of Elizabethan and Jacobean texts I have sacrificed consistency to legibility, avoiding modernization when it interfered with prosody (as it would in almost all of Spenser) but using it whenever it removed unnecessary obstructions. I have been equally free in relinquishing or retaining Italian, French, and German archaisms. For excellent advice on this difficult matter I am particularly grateful to Miss Esther Dunn.

One very great friend, '*un grande amico*', is largely responsible for the fact that the book exists. Not only has Mrs. W. Murray Crane watched the growth of these studies through many years, and persistently encouraged me to pursue them, but at a crucial moment she made the American edition possible by her spontaneous generosity. Like many others, I owe her far more than these words express—a relationship of personal devotion between reader and writer of which Henry Adams (mistakenly) said that it 'may have existed in Queen Elizabeth's time, but is much too close to be true for ours'.

E.W.

Oxford
14 April 1958

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INTRODUCTION

THE LANGUAGE OF MYSTERIES

Any attempt to penetrate the pagan mysteries of the Renaissance should perhaps begin with the admission that the term 'mysteries' has several meanings, and that these tended to become blurred already in antiquity, to the great enrichment and confusion of the subject.[1] For the purpose of this introduction it may be useful to distinguish roughly between three meanings.

The first and original meaning of mysteries, which is exemplified by the festival of Eleusis, is that of a popular ritual of initiation. In it the neophytes were purged of the fear of death and admitted into the company of the blessed, to which they were bound by a vow of silence. But since the sacred rites were administered to a multitude without regard to individual merit,[2] philosophers inclined to look upon them with a certain disdain, which Diogenes expressed with characteristic bluntness. 'He was never initiated, they tell us, and replied to some one who once advised him to be initiated: "It is absurd of you, my young friend, to think that any tax-gatherer, if only he be initiated, can share in the rewards of the just in the next world, while Agesilaus and Epaminondas are doomed to lie in the mire".'[3]

[1] In Greek, the plural μυστήρια was used interchangeably with ὄργια and τελεταί, whereas the singular μυστήριον could mean 'secret' without ritual associations. On the resulting ambiguities, see A. D. Nock, 'Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments', *Mnemosyne* V (1952), pp. 177–213; also Wilamowitz, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* II (1932), p. 45 note 4, p. 71 note 1; and the article 'Mysterien' by O. Kern and T. Hopfner in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-encyclopädie* XVI (1935), [col.] 1209–1350.

[2] The Telesterion at Eleusis held three thousand persons (cf. Nock, *op. cit.*, p. 180). About ten times as many, if we may trust Herodotus VIII, 65, took part in the Eleusinian procession. Plutarch, *De profectu in virtute* 10, regarded large crowds as typical of mystical ceremonies: ' . . . persons who are being initiated into the Mysteries throng together at the outset amid tumult and shouting, and jostle against one another, but when the holy rites are being performed and disclosed the people are immediately attentive in awe and silence . . .' (*Moralia* 81E, tr. F. C. Babbitt). On the absence of intellectual instruction in the mysteries, see Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum* 22 (*Moralia* 422C): ἐν τελετῇ καὶ μυήσει μηδεμίαν ἀπόδειξιν τοῦ λόγου, a remark confirming the much-discussed fragment 15 (Rose) of Aristotle (tr. Ross, XII, p. 87), which says that the neophytes were not taught but moulded: τοὺς τελουμένους οὐ μαθεῖν τι δεῖν ἀλλὰ παθεῖν. Cf. J. Croissant, *Aristote et les mystères* (1932), pp. 137–88, with further literature; also J. Bidez, 'A propos d'un fragment retrouvé de l'Aristote perdu', *Bulletin de l'académie royale de Belgique*, classe des lettres, XXVIII (1942), pp. 201–30.

[3] Julian, *Orationes* VII, 238A (tr. W. C. Wright). The same anecdote in Diogenes Laertius VI, 39.

Although this combination of truculence and common sense would not have pleased the 'dark' Heraclitus, his judgment of mystical initiations did not differ much from Diogenes': he dismissed them as fit for the vulgar;[1] and a similar attitude is reported also of Anaxagoras, of Socrates, and many others.[2] Plato, however, whose words on the subject were to exceed all these in historical resonance, was far too ironic and circumspect to be satisfied with a simple rejection of mysteries. It is true that he rarely spoke of them without mockery;[3] and in the Seventh Letter there is a scathing remark on the social damage that may result from an uncritical surrender to communal feasts of initiation.[4] Yet instead of disclaiming for his philosophy any kinship with such rites, Plato declared on the contrary that philosophy itself was a mystical initiation of another kind, which achieved for a chosen few by conscious inquiry what the mysteries supplied to the vulgar by stirring up their emotions. The cleansing of the soul, the welcoming of death, the power to enter into communion with the Beyond, the ability to 'rage correctly' (ὀρθῶς μαίνεσθαι),[5] these benefits which Plato recognized were commonly provided by the mystical initiations, were to be obtained through his philosophy by rational exercise, by a training in the art of dialectic, whose aim it was to purge the soul of error.[6]

The *mystères cultuels* (which is Festugière's term for the ritual initiations) were thus replaced by *mystères littéraires*,[7] that is, by a figurative use of terms and images which were borrowed from the popular rites but transferred to the intellectual disciplines of

[1] Fragments 14 f. (Diels), cf. also 5, 96.

[2] On Socrates see Lucian, *Demonax* 11. Further sources in E. Derenne, *Les procès d'impiété intentés aux philosophes à Athènes* (1930), particularly pp. 64 ff., on Diagoras's disrespect for mysteries; pp. 190 f., on Aristotle and Eleusis. The charge of ἀσέβεια against philosophers, although partly provoked by their aloofness, had several other and deeper causes; see E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), pp. 189–95; B. Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes* (1955), pp. 45 f.

[3] *Republic* 365A (ἃς δὴ τελετὰς καλοῦσιν) and 366A (αἱ τελεταὶ καὶ οἱ λύσιοι θεοί) correspond almost literally to the disdainful remark of Diogenes quoted above. See furthermore *Euthydemus* 277E, *Gorgias* 497C, *Theaetetus* 155E–156A, *Republic* 560E; also a jest on a *Mysterienformel* in *Symposium* 218B, discussed by A. Dieterich, *Abraxas* (1903), p. 127. These scoffs, which are more numerous, though less famous, than the poetic metaphors in *Symposium* 210–12 and *Phaedrus* 250, would surely be relevant to an interpretation of the latter passages since Plato never abandoned his criticism of religious inspiration, *Meno* 99C–D and *Timaeus* 71D–72B being cool statements of his view. See also *Meno* 97D–98A and *Euthyphro* 11B on the mobile 'images of Daedalus', which are of great value only when 'fastened' since they otherwise 'play truant and run away'; a theme related to *Phaedo* 82B, where the philosopher alone is 'fastened' and therefore safe in the Beyond.

[4] *Epistles* VII, 333E: μυεῖν καὶ ἐποπτεύειν, both technical terms of initiation, used here in a derogatory sense. Cf. Wilamowitz, *Platon* I (1920), p. 39 note 1; *Glaube der Hellenen* II, p. 162; also Kern, 'Mysterien', *op. cit.*, 1254.

[5] *Phaedrus* 244E; cf. I. M. Linforth, 'Telestic Madness in Plato, Phaedrus 244DE', *University of California Publ. in Class. Philol.* XIII (1946), pp. 163–72.

[6] See for example *Sophist* 230C ff.: dialectic as catharsis. Perhaps Plato's adoption of a ritual terminology, besides being a powerful poetic device, was also his way of giving a new twist to a legal obligation: for the formation of a philosophical school at Athens required its establishment as a θίασος; see Wilamowitz, *Antigonos von Karystos* (1881), pp. 263–91, 'Die rechtliche Stellung der Philosophenschulen'; E. Howald, *Platons Leben* (1923), p. 39; A.-J. Festugière, *Épicure et ses dieux* (1946), p. 32 note.

[7] Festugière, *L'idéal religieux des Grecs et l'Évangile* (1932), pp. 116–32.

philosophical debate and meditation.[1] In a half-serious, half-playful appraisal of himself the philosopher took on the attitude of a new hierophant, and addressed his disciples in solemn words which sounded like the noble parody of an initiation: 'And what is purification but the separation of the soul from the body . . . , the habit of the soul gathering and collecting herself into herself on every side . . . ? And what is that which is termed death, but this very separation of the soul from the body? . . . And the true philosophers, and they alone, are ever seeking to release the soul. . . . Then, Simmias, as the true philosophers are ever studying death, to them, of all men, death is the least terrible. . . . And I conceive that the founders of the mysteries had a real meaning, and were not mere triflers when they intimated in a figure long ago that he who passes unsanctified and uninitiated into the world below will lie in a slough, but he who arrives there after initiation and purification will dwell with the gods. For "many", as they say in the mysteries, "are the thyrsus-bearers, but few are the bacchoi",—meaning, as I interpret the word, the true philosophers.'[2]

Thus introduced by Plato with a note of irony, but then thoroughly systematized by Plotinus, the adoption of a ritual terminology to assist and incite the exercise of intelligence[3] proved exceedingly useful as a fiction, but ended, as such fictions are likely to do, by betraying the late Platonists into a revival of magic. As a pedagogue Plotinus was beguilingly tolerant of what he called 'the lesser spectacles'. Always indulgent of religious needs, he did not dissuade his pupil Amelius from sacrificing to the gods although he declined it for himself: 'The gods must come to me, not I to them';[4] and the *Enneads* close with a withdrawal into the purest solitariness (φυγὴ μόνου πρὸς μόνον). But while Plotinus made it absolutely clear that the mystic philosopher 'is as one who presses onward to the inmost sanctuary, leaving behind him the statues in the outer temple',[5] he always admitted the importance of tangible symbols for those who are still outside and yearn to enter. On one occasion, when his school assembled to celebrate the birthday of Plato, his disciple Porphyry recited an enthusiastic hymn on the

[1] A. Diès, *Autour de Platon* (1927), 'phraséologie des mystères' (I, pp. 97 f.); 'Le mysticisme littéraire —La transposition platonicienne' (II, pp. 438–49). According to Diès, 'Plato plays with the sacred formulas' even in his enthusiastic moments, but Werner Jaeger (much like Rohde in his chapter on Plato in *Psyche*) upholds a solemn interpretation throughout; see 'Aristotle's Verses in Praise of Plato', *The Classical Quarterly* XXI (1927), pp. 13–17, also *Aristotle* (1934), pp. 160 f., and the monochrome passages in *Paideia*.

[2] *Phaedo* 67–69.

[3] For example, *Enneads* I, vi, 6, where the παλαιὸς λόγος about 'mire' (the same as in *Phaedo* 69C) is turned into a parable on 'matter' and 'vice'; or *Enneads* VI, ix, 11, a parallel between the vow of silence in the popular mysteries and the 'ineffable' experience of the philosophical mystic. S. Eitrem, *Orakel und Mysterien am Ausgang der Antike* (1947), pp. 20 f. refers to 'neue Mysterien des Gedankens' produced by the philosophical use of 'Mysterienterminologie'. See also Nock, *Conversion* (1933), p. 182. Extreme instances in Proclus, *In Parmenidem* V, 993 (Cousin[2]) on τῆς ἐποπτικωτάτης μυσταγορίας, also *ibid.*, V, 1037.

[4] Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 10.

[5] *Enneads* VI, ix, 11; tr. Dodds, *Select Passages illustrating Neoplatonism* (1923), p. 124.

ἱερὸς γάμος, the 'sacred marriage', which was a token of divine communion in the popular mysteries; but his performance was not well received by the fastidious audience, who cruelly ridiculed his want of sense. Plotinus, however, rose to his defence, saying: 'You have shown yourself a poet, a philosopher, and a hierophant.'[1]

In this gracious remark the word 'hierophant' still had a figurative meaning. The performance in question was not a ritual act but a poetic rhapsody, composed *ad hoc* to edify a group of philosophers who were only too ready to debate it. But it is possible that the irreverent critics of the chant were more foresighted than Plotinus. If the soul could be induced by a certain kind of poetic hymn to rise to a state of philosophic enthusiasm in which it would commune with the Beyond, then a similar force might be claimed also for the magical skills of incantation, for the art of invoking sacred names or numbers, or of fumigating with sacred herbs, of casting spells by drawing figures or by manipulating magical tools. All that bewitching hocus-pocus, apparently so incompatible with dialectical exercises, was gradually readmitted as a handmaid of philosophy and soon rose to become her mistress.[2] And the ceremonies performed by the solemn triflers whom Cumont called 'les disciples infidèles de Plotin',[3] went again under the name of 'mysteries'—*theurgorum mysteria sive potius deliramenta.*[4] Before entering a discussion of pagan mysteries in the Renaissance, it would seem important therefore to make clear in which of these three senses the term 'mysteries' is to be used: the ritual, the figurative, or the magic.

The question should not be answered dogmatically, because in the literature transmitted to the Renaissance the three phases were already thoroughly mixed. However, it is possible to bring the problem into focus by observing the attitude that prevailed among the great Renaissance antiquaries, since it is they who were chiefly responsible

[1] The incident is related by Porphyry himself (*Life of Plotinus* 15; see also Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre*, 1913, p. 47), but the hymn is unfortunately lost. On the ἱερὸς γάμος and its place in the mysteries, see below, p. 132.

[2] For this development, see now the appendix on Theurgy in Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 283–311; of earlier literature the studies of Bidez, 'Le philosophe Jamblique et son école', *Revue des études grecques* XXXII (1919), pp. 29–40; *Vie de Porphyre*, ch. viii f.; *Vie de l'empereur Julien* (1930), pp. 67–81. Also F. Cumont, 'De Porphyre à la déchéance du paganisme', in *Lux perpetua* (1949), pp. 361–84.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 363. The passage corrects Cumont's earlier statement 'Le culte égyptien et le mysticisme de Plotin', *Monuments Piot* XXV (1921–2), pp. 77–92, which does not yet draw a clear distinction between Plotinus and the theurgists.

[4] C. A. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus* I (1829), p. 115. Cumont, *Lux perpetua*, p. 362, justly warns: 'Lorsque les auteurs nous parlent de "mystères" dont la connaissance aurait été . . . transmise aux philosophes néoplatoniciens, ces mystères ne sont pas comparables à ceux de l'ancien paganisme, auxquels participait une assemblée nombreuse d'initiés. . . . L'interrogateur . . . conversait "seul à seul" avec le dieu qui se présentait à sa vue éblouie.' The *modus operandi* of these séances is discussed in Dodds's appendix on Theurgy, *op. cit.*, pp. 291–9. See also Bidez, 'Notes sur les mystères néoplatoniciens', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* VII (1928), pp. 1477–81; 'La liturgie des mystères chez les Néoplatoniciens', *Bulletin de l'académie royale de Belgique*, classe des lettres (1919), pp. 415–30; 'Proclus, Περὶ τῆς ἱερατικῆς τέχνης', in *Mélanges Cumont* (1936), pp. 85 ff.; Hopfner, 'Theurgie', in Pauly-Wissowa VI (1937), 258–70.

for reviving the study of the subject. While they differed widely from each other by the degree to which they promoted, tolerated, or resisted a magical or ritual re-enactment of mysteries, their practical divergencies did not detract from the unanimity with which the figurative understanding was upheld by them as basic.[1] Whenever 'the mysteries of the ancients' were invoked by De Bussi, Beroaldo, Perotti, or Landino, not to mention Ficino or Pico della Mirandola, their concern was less with the original mystery cults than with their philosophical adaptation. Good judgment alone did not impose the restriction; it was largely a case of good luck, for it derived from a historical misconception: they mistook the figurative interpretation as inherent in the original mysteries. As indefatigable readers of Plutarch, Porphyry, and Proclus, they saw the early mystery cults through the eyes of Platonic philosophers who had already interlarded them with *mystères littéraires*. Thus Plato appeared to them not as a critic or transposer of mysteries, but as the heir and oracle of an ancient wisdom for which a ritual disguise had been invented by the founders of the mysteries themselves. And the philosophical cunning thus imputed to those early sages was ascribed also to the Neoplatonic magicians—*les disciples infidèles de Plotin*—whose elaborate prescriptions for working charms and spells were regarded as amplifications or disguises, rather than betrayals, of the Platonic discipline.[2] 'In Porphyry you will enjoy', wrote Pico della Mirandola, 'the copiousness of matter and the multiformity of religion; in Iamblichus you will revere an occult philosophy and strange foreign mysteries (*barbarorum mysteria*) . . . not to mention Proclus, who abounds in Asiatic richness, and those stemming from him, Hermias, Damascius, Olympiodorus, . . . in all of whom there ever gleams . . . "the Divine", which is the distinctive mark of the Platonists.'[3]

The enjoyment Pico derived from occult authors was vicarious and poetical; they exercised his imagination in the employment of outlandish metaphors. It never occurred to him, as it did to less speculative minds, that the turgid lore of the dialectical magi might be put to a more nefarious use than for amplifying the Platonic *mystères littéraires*. Black magic, in the sense that it appealed to Agrippa of Nettesheim, he rejected as a

[1] Even Gyraldus, who was sceptical of the neo-Orphic vagaries of Ficino and Pico (see p. 48 note 2), and gave a sober account of the actual sources available to the Renaissance for reconstructing the ritual of Eleusis (*Historia deorum gentilium*, syntagma xiv: 'De Cerere et Triptolemo', in *Opera omnia* I, 1696, [col.] 429–31), subscribed to the figurative understanding of the mysteries; see also preface to his 'Pythagorae symbolorum interpretatio', *Opera* II, 637 f.

[2] Cf. P. Boyancé, *Le culte des Muses chez les philosophes grecs* (1937), p. 164 note 1: 'Il s'agit, croyons-nous, moins de mystères propres aux Néoplatoniciens, que d'une sorte de technique du mystère, qui prétend retrouver dans tous les mystères positifs la philosophie de Platon.' Whatever the merits of that formula with regard to Iamblichus or Proclus, it applies to their Renaissance followers.

[3] *De hominis dignitate*, ed. E. Garin (1942), pp. 140–2. I have made use of, but not literally followed, the translation by E. L. Forbes in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Cassirer, Kristeller and Randall (1948), pp. 223–54.

vile superstition.[1] But the comparative study of sacred images and incantations, and the extraction from them of a philosophic wisdom, of which the hidden sense remained the same through all its verbal transformations, this seemed to him eminently worthy of a follower of Plato and Plotinus, because both had persistently stressed the basic lesson: that even though language is deceptive and remains 'unserious' (as Plato explained in the *Phaedrus* and the Seventh Letter),[2] it is the only instrument available for a serious philosophical discipline. 'He that would speak exactly', wrote Plotinus, 'must not name it [the ultimate One] by this name or by that; we can but circle, as it were, about its circumference, seeking to interpret in speech our experience of it, now shooting near the mark, and again disappointed of our aim by reason of the antinomies we find in it. The greatest antinomy arises in this, that our understanding of it is . . . by a presence higher than all knowing. . . . Hence the word of the Master [Plato], that it overpasses speech and writing. And yet we speak and write, seeking to forward the pilgrim upon his journey thither. . . .'[3]

In attempting to mark the disparity between verbal instrument and mystical object, Pico made his own language sound provocative and evasive, using it like a significant veil, as if to cover and indicate the sacred fire by an abundance of dark and biting smoke. The sources of the contrived and 'conceited' style of Pico, and of the brusque oratory he developed in it, have not, to my knowledge, been succinctly traced. His persuasive power as a mystagogue certainly owed less to the judicial manner of the Schoolmen, whom he ostensibly imitated in the *Conclusiones*,[4] than to the parabolic

[1] On the subject of synastry and horoscopy, which in Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* are inseparable from sympathetic magic, Ficino did not share the intransigent view of Pico, although Pico acknowledged in the *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* I, i (ed. Garin, p. 60) that their difference of opinion was not so great as might appear (cf. P. O. Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, 1943, pp. 310 ff.). Toward pagan rituals both had an attitude of poetic detachment. Despite the famous celebration of Plato's birthday with a symposium, and other ceremonious assemblies in the Florentine Academy (on which see A. Chastel, *Marsile Ficin et l'art*, 1954, pp. 10 ff.), Ficino's circle at Careggi was less addicted to ritual initiations than the circle of Pomponius Laetus in Rome whose members acquired cryptic names, a custom extended in the sixteenth century to almost all the academies in existence. The mystifying effect of this practice, occasionally heightened by a defiant tone, may have contributed to the suspicion of Paul II against the Roman Academy, which he mistook for a conspiratorial society (V. Zabughin, *Giulio Pomponio Leto* I, 1909, pp. 38–189; Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter* XIII, vi, 4). It is but a refinement of the same error to picture the academies of the Renaissance like Rosicrucian conventicles, as G. F. Hartlaub inclines to do, 'Giorgione und der Mythos der Akademien', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* XLVIII (1927), pp. 233–57, a restatement of *Giorgiones Geheimnis* (1925).

[2] *Phaedrus* 275–8; *Epistles* VII, 344C. Ficino recognized the connexion between the two passages. 'Confirmantur eadem in Epistolis', he wrote in his commentary on the *Phaedrus*, *Opera* (1561), p. 1386.

[3] *Enneads* VI, ix, 3–4; tr. Dodds, *Select Passages*, p. 57. On concealment as an essential feature of Truth, cf. Boyancé, *Le culte des Muses*, pp. 162 f. with further Neoplatonic references.

[4] '. . . in quibus recitandis non Romanae linguae nitorem, sed celebratissimorum Parisiensium disputatorum dicendi genus est imitatus.' *Opera* (Basle 1557), p. 63. His eloquent defence of the 'barbaric' style, in a letter to Ermolao Barbaro, *ibid.*, pp. 351–8, has been re-edited by Garin, *Filosofi italiani del Quattrocento* (1942), pp. 428–45, and translated by Q. Breen in *Journal of the History of Ideas* XIII (1952), pp. 384–412. With deliberate paradox the

fervour and tenebrosity he had found in the late-antique Platonists and the early-Christian Fathers. In his book *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, Marrou gave an excellent description of the odd blandishments of their secretive style: 'L'obscurité de l'expression, le mystère qui entoure l'idée ainsi dissimulée, est pour celle-ci le plus bel ornement, une cause puissante d'attrait. . . . *Vela faciunt honorem secreti.*'[1] And Festugière remarked on the same subject: 'Cette notion de mystère, d'obscurité, est un complément de celle d'autorité. Plus une vérité est cachée, secrète, plus elle a de force.'[2] Although these remarks refer to late-antique writing, they could be taken for descriptions of a neo-barbaric fashion in Renaissance diction. 'Learning on its revival', to quote David Hume, 'was attired in the same unnatural garb which it wore at the time of its decay among the Greeks and Romans.' The Platonic revival, in particular, was suffused with that 'Asiatic richness' which Pico enjoyed so abundantly in Proclus. His first essay in the philosophy of myths was deliberately couched in exotic language. 'If I am not mistaken', he wrote proudly to a friend, 'it will be intelligible only to a few, for it is filled with many mysteries from the secret philosophy of the ancients.'[3]

It would be a mistake to belittle this cryptic pomp as a mere youthful affectation: for Pico adhered to it in all his writings, and these were regarded by his contemporaries as models of how to adumbrate an ineffable revelation through speech. To Pico it would have seemed both frivolous and illogical to discuss mysteries in plain language. He knew that mysteries require an initiation: *Hinc appellata mysteria: nec mysteria quae non occulta.*[4] But secrecy was not only part of their definition; it contributed also to the respect they inspired. The fact that these sublime revelations were not easily accessible seemed to heighten their authority. And yet, if their authority was to be felt, it was not sufficient to keep the mysteries hidden; it was also necessary that they be known to exist. Hence Pico contrived, when he wrote about mysteries, a style of elliptical vulgarization which enabled him to hint at the secrets he professed to withhold: *si secretiorum aliquid mysteriorum fas est vel sub aenigmate in publicum proferre.*[5] The proper manner for an official mystagogue, he suggested, was to speak in riddles, in words that are 'published and not published', *editos esse et non editos.*[6] The phrase recalls the verbal juggles of Apuleius when he described his experience as a neophyte in the rites of Isis: 'Behold, I have conveyed to you what you must ignore although you have heard it', *ecce tibi rettuli quae, quamvis audita, ignores tamen necesse est.*[7]

letter is composed in an elegant style and should warn us against mistaking Pico (as in A. Dulles, *Princeps Concordiae*, 1941) for a thorough-going scholastic.

[1] (1938), pp. 488 ff.

[2] *Revue des études grecques* LII (1939), p. 236.

[3] L. Dorez, 'Lettres inédites de Jean Pic de la Mirandole', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* XXV (1895), pp. 357 f., referring to Pico's commentary on Benivieni's *Canzona d'amore*.

[4] *Heptaplus*, prooemium, ed. Garin, p. 172.

[5] *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, p. 130.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

[7] *Metamorphoses* XI, 23.

A consummate Renaissance master and critic of the art of cryptic expression was the Ferrarese humanist Celio Calcagnini, whose reflections on the use and abuse of mysteries deliberately alternated between attack and defence. 'You believe', he wrote to his nephew, 'that mysteries cease to be mysteries when they are promulgated. . . . But I hold the opposite view. . . . You think that treasures should be buried? That is the opinion of avaricious men. . . . For what is the use of hidden music? . . . Mysteries are always mysteries, so long as they are not conveyed to profane ears.'[1] But the last reservation, that mysteries must be protected from the vulgar, merely restated the initial problem. Cacalgnini was aware that 'published mysteries' would be a contradiction in terms; yet, the withholding of knowledge seemed to him vain and ignoble. An essay entitled *Descriptio silentii* contains his shrewd solution of the dilemma.[2] Although the essay was inspired by an image of Harpocrates[3] and ostensibly composed in praise of silence, he managed nevertheless to pour forth in it a veritable catalogue of arcana, which he concluded by praising the virtues of speech: 'For it is as Hesiod said, speech is man's best treasure.' But, he added, the treasure must not be wasted: a 'prudent man' should always 'observe the proper alternation between speech and silence.' The verbal ciphers and hieroglyphs, however, with which Calcagnini adorned his argument, show him admitting still a third possibility—the prudence of speaking in riddles. By a judicious use of enigmatic words and images it was possible, he thought, to combine speech with silence: and that was the language of the mysteries. 'All those who are wise in divine matters', wrote Dionysius the Areopagite, 'and are interpreters of the mystical revelations prefer incongruous symbols for holy things, so that divine things may not be easily accessible.'[4]

Had the cult of the incongruous produced nothing but monsters, it would have only a limited, anthropological interest. We could then be content to survey the *Hieroglyphica* of Pierio Valeriano, and marvel at the ingenious piety of the author in evading

[1] Celio Calcagnini, *Opera aliquot* (1544), p. 27.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 491–4.

[3] On Harpocrates as a god of mystical silence see Gyraldus, *op. cit.*, syntagma i (*Opera* I, 57 f.); Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica* (1575), fol. 261r; and again Calcagnini, 'De profectu', *Opera*, p. 333 (after Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 68, *Moralia* 378C). His typical gesture of lifting a forefinger to his lips —*quique premit vocem digitoque silentia suadet* (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IX, 692)—was transferred by Achille Bocchi, *Symbolicae quaestiones* (1574), no. lxiv, from Harpocrates to Hermes the mystagogue (our fig. 21) who guides the souls from outward appearances back to the inward One: *Silentio deum cole—Monas manet in se.* In seeing Hermes represented as spirit of silence, one was meant to recall, with a certain shock, that he is normally the god of eloquence. But Bocchi leaves the reader in no doubt that the subject is an Egyptian mystery. His text invokes 'the Egyptian Harpocrates' together with 'Hermes Trismegistus', cf. Ficino, *In Mercurium Trismegistum*, cap. xiii: 'Mercurii . . . de impositione silentii', *Opera*, pp. 1854 ff.; referring to *Corpus Hermeticum*, ed. Nock-Festugière II (1945), xiii, 16, 22.

[4] *De coelesti hierarchia* II, 5. The same argument in Julian, *Orationes* V, 170A–C; VII, 222C. Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis* 21 (*Moralia* 404D), quotes Heraclitus (= fr. B93, Diels) on the Delphic prophecies of Apollo: οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει, 'he neither tells nor conceals but gives a sign'.

the divine splendour he professes to worship.[1] But in great Renaissance works of art, which often draw from the same sources as Valeriano, the splendour does shine forth through the disguise, and gives to the veil itself a peculiar beauty. Egidio da Viterbo, the celebrated Augustinian preacher, who extolled the pagan mysteries as models of elegance in religion,[2] emphatically stressed, in an attempt to translate for his Renaissance audience Dionysius's praise of incongruity, the beautifying effect of mystical adumbration: 'For Dionysius says the divine ray cannot reach us unless it is covered with poetic veils.'[3]

It has been observed that in a great work of art the depth always comes to the surface, and that only because of their irresistible oratory, great works survive the capriciousness of time. 'Dans le grand naufrage du temps', says Gide, 'c'est par la peau que les chefs-d'oeuvre flottent. . . . Sans l'inégalable beauté de sa prose, qui s'intéresserait encore à Bossuet?' Our interest in Renaissance mysteries might indeed be slight, were it not for the splendour of their expression in Renaissance art. But the fact that seemingly remote ideas shine forth through a surface of unmistakable radiance, is perhaps a sufficient reason for pursuing them into their hidden depth. For when ideas are so forcefully expressed in art, it is unlikely that their importance will be confined to art alone.

Although the chief aim of this book will be to elucidate a number of great Renaissance works of art, I shall not hesitate to pursue philosophical arguments in their own terms, and in whatever detail they may require. The question to what extent any Renaissance painter, even one so renowned for his intellect as Botticelli or Raphael, would have cared to master a philosophical system is perhaps less awkward to answer than it might seem: for we must not confuse our own labour in reconstructing their knowledge with their relatively effortless way of acquiring some of it by oral instruction. Calcagnini, who knew Raphael well, remarked that it was his greatest pleasure in life 'to be taught and to teach', *doceri ac docere*.[4] But if the Renaissance painter could thus avail himself of a royal road to knowledge through learned dialogue, by what method can his knowledge now be reconstructed historically?

[1] In the dedication to Duke Cosimo de' Medici: 'In nova vero lege novoque instrumento cum Assertor noster ait, "Aperiam in parabolis os meum, et in aenigmate antiqua loquar", quid aliud sibi voluit, quam "hieroglyphice sermonem faciam, et allegorice vetusta rerum proferam monumenta"?' *Hieroglyphica* (1575), preface, fol. 4^{v}.

[2] Cf. Calcagnini, *Opera*, p. 101. On Egidio da Viterbo see F. Fiorentino, *Il risorgimento filosofico nel Quattrocento* (1885), pp. 251–74; G. Signorelli, *Il cardinale Egidio da Viterbo* (1929); G. Toffanin, *Giovanni Pontano fra l'uomo e la natura* (1938), pp. 15–35; Garin, *Filosofi italiani*, pp. 532 f.; Wind, 'The Revival of Origen', in *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Greene* (1954), pp. 416 ff. with further literature in notes 20–30.

[3] *In librum primum Sententiarum commentationes ad mentem Platonis*, Cod. Vat. lat. 6325, fols. 13 f. An edition by Eugenio Massa of this important work is in preparation.

[4] Letter to Jacob Ziegler, *Opera*, p. 101.

The process of recapturing the substance of past conversations is necessarily more complicated than the conversations themselves. A historian tracing the echo of our own debates might justly infer from the common use of such words as microbe or molecule that scientific discovery had moulded our imagination; but he would badly err if he assumed that a proper use of these words would always be attended by a complete technical mastery of the underlying theory. Yet, supposing the meaning of the words were lost, and a historian were trying to recover them, surely he would have to recognize that the key to the colloquial usage is in the scientific, and that his only chance of recapturing the first is to acquaint himself with the second. The same rule applies to an iconographer trying to reconstruct the lost argument of a Renaissance painting. He must learn more about Renaissance arguments than the painter needed to know; and this is not, as has been claimed, a self-contradiction, but the plain outcome of the undeniable fact that we no longer enjoy the advantages of Renaissance conversation. We must make up for it through reading and inference. Iconography is always, as Focillon observed with regret, *un détour*, an unavoidably round-about approach to art. Its reward, in the study of Renaissance mysteries, is that it may help to remove the veil of obscurity which not only distance in time (although in itself sufficient for that purpose) but a deliberate obliqueness in the use of metaphor has spread over some of the greatest Renaissance paintings. They were designed for initiates, hence they require an initiation.

Aesthetically speaking, there can be no doubt that the presence of unresolved residues of meaning is an obstacle to the enjoyment of art. However great the visual satisfaction produced by a painting, it cannot reach a perfect state so long as the spectator is plagued by a suspicion that there is more in the painting than meets the eye. In literature, the same sort of embarrassment may be caused by Spenser's, Chapman's, or even Shakespeare's verses in a reader who has been advised to surrender himself to the music of the poetry without worrying whether he understands every line or not. But however justified as a preliminary approach, it is doubtful how long that attitude can be sustained without flattening the aesthetic enjoyment.[1]

I hope therefore I shall not be misunderstood as favouring the doctrine of mysteries I am about to expound. The axiom proposed by Pico della Mirandola, that for mysteries to be deep they must be obscure, seems to me as untrue as the pernicious axiom of

[1] In recent years, esoteric studies of Donne, Herbert, Blake, and Yeats have raised the question of their poetic utility. While it is certain that readers repelled by recondite meanings are likely to miss some magnificent poetic metaphors, on the other hand those addicted to esoteric studies may lose sight of the poetry altogether. But the danger of these studies does not lessen their importance. In each instance their relevance is a question of poetic tact; that is, it cannot be settled in the abstract, but depends on that altogether indefinable but unmistakable sense of pitch which distinguishes a pertinent from a rambling interpretation. But this is not meant to discourage the ramblers.

Burke that 'a clear idea is another name for a little idea'. But there is no evading the fact, however unpleasant, that a great art did flourish on that impure soil. In studying the subject I shall strive for clarity, an objectionable aim from the point of view of the Renaissance mystagogues themselves. Yet the understanding of these disturbing phenomena is not furthered by succumbing to them, any more than by ignoring their existence. As Donne observed, disguise is one of the great forces of revelation: 'For as well the Pillar of *Cloud*, as that of *Fire*, did the Office of directing.'

CHAPTER I

POETIC THEOLOGY

Pico della Mirandola planned to write a book on the secret nature of pagan myths which was to bear the title *Poetica Theologia.* 'It was the opinion of the ancient theologians', he said in his Commentary on Benivieni's *Canzona d'amore*, 'that divine subjects and the secret Mysteries must not be rashly divulged. . . . That is why the Egyptians had sculptures of sphinxes in all their temples, to indicate that divine knowledge, if committed to writing at all, must be covered with enigmatic veils and poetic dissimulation. . . . How that was done . . . by Latin and Greek poets we shall explain in the book of our Poetic Theology.'[1]

Although the book has not survived (assuming it was written), the method employed by Pico, as well as some of his conclusions, can be inferred from his other works.[2] He held that pagan religions, without exception, had used a 'hieroglyphic' imagery; that they had concealed their revelations in myths and fables which were designed to distract the attention of the multitude, and so protect the divine secrets from profanation: 'showing only the crust of the mysteries to the vulgar, while reserving the marrow of the true sense for higher and more perfected spirits.'[3] As an example Pico quoted the Orphic Hymns, for he supposed that Orpheus had concealed in them a religious revelation which he wished to be understood only by a small sect of initiates: 'In the manner of the ancient theologians, Orpheus interwove the mysteries of his doctrines with the texture of fables and covered them with a poetic veil, in order that anyone reading his hymns would think they contained nothing but the sheerest tales and trifles.'[4] But having studied Plato, Plotinus and Proclus with care, Pico felt certain

[1] *Commento*, lib. III, cap. xi, stanza 9 (ed. Garin, p. 580). See also *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, p. 156; *Heptaplus*, prooemium, *ibid.*, p. 172. The remark about the sphinxes is not Pico's invention but derives from Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 9 (*Moralia* 354C).

[2] Besides the *Commento*, see *Heptaplus*, *De hominis dignitate*, *Apologia*, and the mythologica lsections of the *Nongentae conclusiones*.

[3] *Commento* III, xi, 9 (ed. Garin, p. 580).

[4] *De hominis dignitate* (ed. Garin, p. 162). The phrasing recalls Iamblichus, *De vita pythagorica* xxiii, 104 f.

that these philosophers had been initiated into the mysteries of Orpheus,[1] and he proposed to resolve with their help the arcana of the Orphic Hymns.

In praising the wisdom of such religious disguises, Pico claimed that the pagan tradition had a virtue in common with the Bible. That there were Hebrew mysteries as well as pagan, the Bible suggested by recording that on two occasions Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai for the purpose of receiving the tablets of the Law.[2] Since it would be absurd to suppose that God needed in each of these instances forty days to hand Moses two tablets inscribed with ten commandments and accompanied by a series of liturgical rules, it was evident that God had conversed with Moses on further matters, and had told him innumerable divine secrets which were not to be written down. These were transmitted among the rabbis by an oral tradition known as Cabbala (in which the theory of the *sephiroth* and the 'absconded God' resembled the Neoplatonic 'emanations' and the 'One beyond Being').[3] In relation to the written law of the Old Testament, the Cabbala was thought by Pico to hold the same position as Orphic secrets held in relation to pagan myths. The biblical text was the crust, the Cabbala the marrow. The law was given to the many, but its spiritual understanding to only a few. With an unanswerable oratorical gesture Pico pointed to 'the tailors, cooks, butchers, shepherds, servants, maids, to all of whom the written law was given. Would these have been able to carry the burden of the entire Mosaic or divine understanding? Moses, however, on the height of the mountain, comparable to that mountain on which the Lord often spoke to his Disciples, was so illumined by the rays of the divine sun that his whole face shone in a miraculous manner; but because the people with their dim and owlish eyes could not bear the light, he addressed them with his face veiled.'[4]

[1] The relevant passages have been collected by O. Kern, *Orphicorum fragmenta* (1922), Index ii. He lists 34 passages in Plato, 4 in Plotinus, and well over 200 in Proclus. A lost work ascribed by Suidas to both Syrianus and Proclus dealt with 'the symphony of Orpheus, Pythagoras and Plato'. Cf. Rohde, *Psyche* II (1903), pp. 415 f., whose remarkably sane and fresh observations on the subject are still well worth consulting. A useful compilation in F. Weber, *Platonische Notizen über Orpheus* (1899), less confident than F. M. Cornford, 'Plato and Orpheus', *Classical Review* XVII (1903), pp. 433–45, and less destructive than H. W. Thomas, 'Επέκεινα (1938). For the present state of the problem, see Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 147–9, and 168–72, a critical middle course between the extreme scepticism of I. M. Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus* (1941), and the overconfidence of K. Ziegler, 'Orphische Dichtung', in Pauly-Wissowa XVIII (1942), 1321–1417, or now of R. Böhme, *Orpheus: Das Alter des Kitharoden* (1953). The thesis carried furthest by Boyancé, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–31, 89, etc., that what is said about, and against, Orphic τελεταί in Plato, refers wholly or in part to the Eleusinian mysteries, is still open to dispute (cf. Dodds, *op. cit.*, pp. 222, 234 note 82, on *Republic* 363C—*Laws* 907B), despite Wilamowitz, *Glaube der Hellenen* II, pp. 58 f. and 162: 'So schätzt er die eleusinischen Mysterien ein.'

[2] Exodus xxiv, 18: first visit of forty days. Exodus xxxiv, 28: second visit of forty days.

[3] Cf. Pico, *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, pp. 154 ff., repeated in *Apologia*, *Opera*, pp. 122 f.: 'Scribunt non modo celebres Hebraeorum doctores, sed ex nostris quoque Esdras, Hilarius, et Origenes, Mosem non legem modo, quam quinque exaratam libris posteris reliquit, sed secretiorem quoque et veram legis enarrationem in monte divinitus accepisse . . . dicta est Cabala', etc. Cf. II Esdras xiv, 4–6.

[4] *Heptaplus*, prooemium (ed. Garin, p. 174).

And the same device, Pico observed, was also used by Christ. 'Jesus Christ, *imago substantiae Dei*, did not write the gospel but preached it.'[1] To the common people he spoke in parables, but to a few disciples he explained more directly the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. 'Origen wrote that Jesus Christ revealed many mysteries to his disciples which they did not wish to put down in writing, but communicated only by word of mouth to those whom they regarded as worthy.'[2] And Pico added that this was 'confirmed by Dionysius the Areopagite', that is, by the Athenian disciple of St Paul (Acts xvii, 34) to whom a series of mystical Neoplatonic writings, apparently composed in the fifth century A.D., were piously ascribed by their anonymous author. Dionysius was assumed to have originally received his mystical initiation directly from St Paul, again in a secret and purely oral manner; but like the late Cabbalists and the Platonic heirs of Orpheus, he—or the late scribe whom he inspired—committed the laudable indiscretion of entrusting the revelation to paper. Without a so remarkably universal breach of etiquette, it might have been difficult for the Renaissance to revive the Orphic, Mosaic, and Pauline secrets.[3]

In comparing the mysteries to each other, Pico discovered between them an unsuspected affinity. In outward dogma, reconciliation would not seem possible between the pagan, Hebrew, and Christian theologies, each committed to a different revelation; but if the nature of the pagan gods were understood in the mystical sense of the Orphic Platonists, and the nature of the Mosaic Law in the hidden sense of the Cabbala, and if the nature of Christian Grace were unfolded in the fulness of the secrets which Saint Paul had revealed to Dionysius the Areopagite, it would be found that these theologies differed not at all in substance but only in name.[4] A philosophy of tolerance was accordingly worked out in the form of a hidden concordance which seemed to confirm the statement of St Augustine: 'The thing itself (*res ipsa*), which is now called the

[1] *Loc. cit.*

[2] *Commento* III, xi, 9 (ed. Garin, p. 580); also *De hominis dignitate* (ed. Garin, p. 156).

[3] A simple summary of this triple concordance in Cod. Vat. lat. 5808, fol. 2r, by Egidio da Viterbo: 'Sane divinae res quae legi possunt, secantur in partes tres: quaedam gentes: quaedam prophetae veteres: quaedam novae legis scriptores prodidere. Gentium theologiam Plato post Orpheos, Museos, Linos . . . colligere . . . laborat. Dionysius novam, Platonis exemplo motus, sed Pauli oraculis eruditus, . . . contemplatur. Pars tertia superest, Prophetarum veterum. . . . Soli qui per chabala . . . traditionem quasi per manus accipere, magna vi librorum aggressi id sunt: sicut Picus nobis primus innuit. . . .'

[4] 'These books [of the Cabbala] I procured at no small expense, and read them with the greatest attention and indefatigable labours. In them I found—God is my witness—not so much of the Jewish as the Christian religion. Here was the mystery of the Trinity, here the incarnation of the Word, here the divinity of the Messiah . . . the same as we daily read in Paul and Dionysius, in Jerome and Augustine. On those matters which pertain to philosophy you would think you were hearing Pythagoras and Plato, whose theories are so akin to the Christian faith that our Augustine gave infinite thanks to God because the books of the Platonists had come to his hands.' *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, p. 160. See also J. L. Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (1944), p. 25, but the statement on p. 29 that there is no explicit Cabbala in the *Heptaplus* must be due to an oversight. See p. 378 in Garin's edition.

Christian religion, was with the ancients (*erat apud antiquos*), and it was with the human race from its beginning to the time when Christ appeared in the flesh: from when on the true religion, which already existed, began to be called the Christian.'[1] Cabbalistic thought and pagan imagery might therefore, according to Pico's conclusions, become new handmaidens of Christian theology, and should be used by the theologian to his own advantage. From the Cabbalists he might acquire an additional finesse of biblical learning which would reveal a concealed depth in the use of Hebrew letters, while the pagans would teach him how to express the mysteries in an incomparably rich and poetical form.

An element of doctrine was thus imparted to classical myths, and an element of poetry to canonical doctrines. The Scripture itself, in Pico's opinion, was like an external deposit, a crust which tended to harden unduly; but the apocryphal tradition was a deep well from which the faith in the canon might be refreshed and nourished. His relentless attack on rigidities of any kind, whether in theologians, grammarians, or astrologers, gave to his apparently abstruse speculations an anti-dogmatic force and freshness. *A myth gets its animation from a mystery.* With that postulate he confounded the catechizers who 'on hearing a speech delivered from a rostrum, believe the rostrum produces the speech.'[2]

For the secret affinity which Pico so ingeniously discovered between pagan and biblical revelations, the historical cause is depressingly simple. Whether neo-Orphic, Cabbalistic, or pseudo-Dionysian, the sources adduced by Pico were all late-antique, if not mediaeval. Apart from bearing the common stamp of their time, they owe a common debt to the metaphysics of Plato. The claim that in these late Neoplatonic speculations there was a vestige of an ancient mystery religion, older than Homer and Hesiod, was a theory which it would be difficult either to prove or refute, because a purely oral transmission, if it existed, could of course not be traced or tested with documents. Pico was aware that only at a late period were the mysteries recorded in script.[3] The pagan revival to which he adhered was therefore less a 'revival of the classics' than a recrudescence of that ugly thing which has been called 'late-antique

[1] *Retractationes* I, xiii. In preaching on the Areopagus, St Paul himself had referred to the religious evidence in pagan poets, Acts xvii, 28: 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said.'

[2] Compare Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 66 (*Moralia* 377E).

[3] See his explanation in the case of the Cabbala, *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, p. 158; *Apologia*, *Opera*, p. 123: Esdras was the first to alter the rule, for fear that the oral tradition might be interrupted and lost in 'a period of exiles, persecutions, flights, and captivities'. Similar reasons could undoubtedly explain why the supposedly ancient Egyptian wisdom of Hermes Trismegistus was recorded in Greek; why the preservation of the Chaldean Oracles in Greek did not invalidate their ascription to Zoroaster; or why the writer named Dionysius the Areopagite was so prompt in disclosing his revelations through books.

syncretism'.[1] His defence of literary barbarism, in a letter addressed to Ermolao Barbaro,[2] shows him ready to sacrifice a polished style to the suggestiveness of a more rugged diction. He persistently claimed, as several romantic scholars have claimed since, that in the recondite and often monstrous decomposition which the classical heritage suffered in the Hellenistic age, the genuine and permanent foundations of the classical achievement are laid bare.[3]

Though Pico used the method of mystical reduction for a more radical purpose than Ficino, there can be little doubt that he had it from his teacher. To understand a classical author 'deeply', Ficino would always turn to a Hellenistic commentary. Even Plato, to whose translation and exposition the major part of his life was devoted, he read with the eyes of Plotinus,[4] in whom he discovered 'an inspiration no less noble but occasionally more profound (*in Plotino autem flatum . . . non minus augustum, nonnumquam ferme profundiorem*)'.[5] His commentary on Plato's *Symposium* was largely derived, as he himself admitted, from the sixth book of the first *Ennead*;[6] and in preparing his readers for the study of Plotinus he paraphrased the relation of this profounder Platonist to Plato by alluding to the descent of the Holy Ghost during the baptism of Christ (Luke iii, 22): 'And you may think that Plato himself spoke thus to Plotinus: "Thou art my beloved son; in thee I am well pleased".'[7] To make Plato appear as God the Father giving his blessing to Plotinus as God the Son, is to remove Plato to the inhuman heights of the Almighty, from which Plotinus descends as a philosophical redeemer, a Christ of the Platonic mysteries. That Ficino sensed no

[1] E. Anagnine, *G. Pico della Mirandola: Sincretismo religioso-filosofico*, 1937.

[2] *Opera*, p. 354. See above, p. 18 note 4.

[3] That was one of the assumptions in Friedrich Creuzer's *Symbolik*, first published 1810–12, which also recur in Nietzsche and Usener, and in some of Jane Harrison's reflections. A fair summary of Creuzer's system in O. Gruppe, *Geschichte der klassischen Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte* (1921), pp. 131 f., with special emphasis on the doctrine 'that whoever starts from the Olympian gods of Homer, fails to touch the primeval sources of religious life among the Greeks' (p. 132).—'Since he [Creuzer] found similar thoughts among the Neoplatonists, the fallacious inference was inevitable that they had preserved the oldest Greek religion, . . . which was only superficially overlaid by poetry. For this supposition he thought there was also direct evidence in the Orphic fragments: for although he conceded, on the authority of Herodotus, that their ancient date could not be upheld, he yet assumed with the Neoplatonists that the doctrines preserved in them were *uralt* (*Symbolik* III, pp. 155 ff.), and interpreted them, as they did themselves, by reading into them Neoplatonic doctrines.' On the question of going back beyond Homer, Creuzer's autobiography, *Aus dem Leben eines alten Professors* (1848), pp. 113 ff., quotes two remarkable letters from Goethe and Jacobs. Both, in conceding that Homer does not represent the primitive stage of Greek religion, regretted the absence of definable limits in Creuzer's search for primitive roots. 'Geht's nun aber gar noch weiter, . . . aus dem hellenischen Gott-Menschenkreise nach allen Regionen der Erde, um das Ähnliche dort aufzuweisen in Worten und Bildern, hier die Frost-Riesen, dort die Feuer-Brahmen, so wird es uns gar zu weh, und wir flüchten wieder nach Ionien. . . .' (Goethe).

[4] '. . . Platonem ipsum sub Plotini persona loquentem vos audituros . . .', *Opera*, p. 1548.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *In* [*Plotini*] *librum de pulchritudine*, *ibid.*, p. 1574: 'nam de his in Convivio de Amore latius disputamus.'

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 1548.

blasphemy in the metaphor shows to what extent Christian and Platonic sources of revelation were regarded as concordant and interchangeable.

The notorious ease with which the Renaissance transferred a Christian figure of speech to a pagan subject, or gave pagan features to a Christian theme, has generally been interpreted as a sign of the profound secularization of Renaissance culture. If a Madonna or a Magdalen could be made to resemble a Venus, or if Sannazaro could write his *De partu virginis* in the form of a polished Virgilian epic, Christian piety had patently given way to a taste for the pagan and profane. Before accepting so simple a judgment, it is perhaps useful to remember that hybridization works both ways. In Sannazaro's poem, the Virgilian tone has acquired a twist of mystical ardour which is unmistakably Christian; and Renaissance art produced many images of Venus which resemble a Madonna or a Magdalen. An extreme instance is the *Hypnerotomachia*, in which Venus is pictured as a *mater dolorosa*, nourishing her infant son with tears:

Non lac, saeve puer, lachrymas sed sugis amaras.[1]

Unquestionably, once the transference of types became a universal practice, it was applied by inferior artists without much thought. It would be absurd, therefore, to look for a mystery behind every hybrid image of the Renaissance. In principle, however, the artistic habit of exploring and playing with these oscillations was sanctioned by a theory of concordance which discovered a sacred mystery in pagan beauty, conceiving it to be a poetic medium through which the divine splendour had been transmitted: 'For Dionysius says the divine ray cannot reach us unless it is covered with poetic veils.'[2]

How completely the veils could occasionally disguise the profundity of a thought they were designed to 'circumfuse', is shown by the image of the three Graces on Pico della Mirandola's medal (fig. 10). Since Pico praised the cunning of Orpheus because one might think his Hymns 'contained nothing but the sheerest tales and trifles', it is perhaps gratifying that Pico's own symbol was described as a trifle by Sir George Hill. In the opinion of this unrivalled connoisseur of Renaissance medals, 'the three Graces on the reverse, named Beauty, Love, and Pleasure, hardly do justice to the noble ideals of the philosopher.'[3] Yet when we have examined the ideas of the philosopher more closely, and inquire into the meaning of the inscription, we shall

[1] *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499), fol. z vii^{v}.

[2] Egidio da Viterbo, as quoted above, p. 21 note 3.

[3] G. F. Hill, *A Guide to the Exhibition of Medals of the Renaissance in the British Museum* (1923), p. 30. A like judgment in Julius Friedlaender, 'Die italienischen Schaumünzen des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts', *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen* II (1881), p. 251, no. 45: 'Dies ist der berühmte Philosoph, "der Phönix der Geister". Die Kehrseite passt nicht für ihn.'

find that the figures illustrate a well-defined Neoplatonic argument, a proposition of such crucial importance to one particular phase of Pico's thought that the medal can be dated almost to the year. But before attempting to decipher the medal, it will be necessary to trace a few traditional ideas, chiefly of Stoical origin, which entered into what the Renaissance called 'the mystery of the Graces'.

CHAPTER II

SENECA'S GRACES

A remarkably devious theory of grace was occasioned by the placid image of the *Three Graces* (fig. 9).[1] Perhaps no other group of antiquity has so persistently engaged the allegorical imagination, or served so well to conceal and preserve, as in an innocuous-looking vessel, some perilous alchemy of the mind. Certain commonplaces of Stoic morality might not have been so long condoned, nor some of the extravagances of Neoplatonism so willingly accepted, had they not both been sustained by the three Graces:

> *Vain wisdom all and false philosophy,*
> *Yet with a pleasing sorcery could charm . . .*

If allegory were only what it is reputed to be—an artifice by which a set of ideas are attached, one by one, to a set of images—it would be difficult to account for its nefarious use. Since there is little demand for repeating the simple, and no advantage in doubling the complicated, an image designed to duplicate a thought should be either superfluous or distracting. But persuasive allegory does not duplicate. If a thought is

[1] This Pompeian fresco, of course unknown to the Renaissance, and a group recently uncovered in Cyrene (*Notiziario archeologico* II, 1916, pp. 51–60) are the clearest surviving examples of an ancient type which was copied in two Florentine medals of the Quattrocento (figs. 10 and 13). It follows, as shown by E. Schmidt ('Übertragung gemalter Figuren in Rundplastik', in *Festschrift Paul Arndt*, 1925, pp. 102 f.), that an ancient piece of that kind, now lost, must have existed in the fifteenth century. The medals show the central figure in a stiff posture, with legs tightly joined, unlike the famous group in Siena, whose freer posture recurs in Raphael's painting of the Graces (our fig. 34). Hill's suggestion (*A Corpus of Italian Medals*, 1930, no. 1021) that the antique group copied by the medallist was 'not, apparently, the Sienese version, but possibly that which was once in the possession of Prospero Colonna', overlooks the testimony of Fra Giocondo that the two are one: 'Erant olim in domo R^mi^ Carlis de Columna cum subscriptis versibus. Nunc vero sunt in R^mi^ Carlis Senensis sine infrascriptis carminibus', R. Lanciani, *Storia degli scavi di Roma* (1902), p. 114, also p. 82. On the *Silloge Giocondiana* in the Vatican (Cod. Reg. 2064) and at Chatsworth, see *ibid.*, p. 96. The epigram, which locates the group in Casa Colonna ('Sunt nudae Charites . . .', *Corp. Inscr. Lat.* VI[5], no. 3*b), continued to be quoted long after the group had left for Siena, for example by Cartari at the conclusion of his *Imagini* (1556), p. 565. A fragment of an ancient relief in Pisa, reproduced in E. Tea, 'Le fonti delle Grazie di Raffaello', *L'arte* XVII (1914), pp. 41–48, fig. 4, is closer to the medals than the Sienese group, but not as close as the Pompeian fresco.

intricate and difficult to follow, it needs to be fastened to a transparent image from which it may derive a borrowed simplicity. On the other hand, if an idea is plain, there is an advantage in tracing it through a rich design which may help to disguise its bareness. Allegory is therefore a sophistic device, and it was used with cunning by Plato. It releases a counterplay of imagination and thought by which each becomes an irritant to the other, and both may grow through the irksome contact:

Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent.

If the process seems absurd, it may be the more, not the less, useful for that; for we remember the absurd more easily than the normal,[1] and the monster often precedes the god. As in the study of rituals, it is an almost unfailing rule that those allegories which seem the most ridiculous at first, may prove in the end to be the most vital; of this *The Graces* are a perfect instance. The easy symmetry of the group, relieved by the sideward turn of the middle figure, should have saved it, one might think, from moral vagaries. But its very transparency made the design a suitable target. Although supposedly very unnatural, allegory is like nature in that it abhors a vacuum.

When Chrysippus composed a treatise on liberality, on how to be gracious in the offering, accepting, and returning of benefits, he tried to render his precepts memorable by attaching them to the Graces. His book being lost, we would know little of the advantage he took of these patient figures, had not Seneca, despite his own advice that 'these ineptitudes should be left to the poets', gone to the trouble of collecting them. 'Why the Graces are three, why they are sisters, why they interlace their hands', all that is explained in *De beneficiis* by the triple rhythm of generosity, which consists of giving, accepting, and returning. As *gratias agere* means 'to return thanks', the three phases must be interlocked in a dance as are the Graces (*ille consertis manibus in se redeuntium chorus*); for 'the order of the benefit requires that it be given away by the

[1] A basic rule of the *ars memorativa*, anticipated in the Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* III, xxii, and fully illustrated in the mnemonic images collected by L. Volkmann, 'Ars memorativa', *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* III (1929), pp. 111–200. Constructive absurdity is also at the root of that supposedly rational use of allegory by which an idea or image which has become objectionable is 'saved' through a figurative interpretation. The spiritual way of 'saving' an objectionable passage is to turn it upside down. St Gregory, *Moralia* III, xxviii, 55, extracted from the story of David and Bathsheba a prophetic allegory which rendered David innocent and Uriah culpable: 'Ille, per vitae culpam, in prophetia signat innocentiam; et iste, per vitae innocentiam in prophetia exprimit culpam.' And he was satisfied that this ingenious inversion followed the logic of biblical prefiguration: 'sic in facto rem approbat, ut ei in mysterio contradicat' (*Patr. Lat.* LXXV, 626 f.). It is not difficult to recognize the same ingenuity in the pagan allegories of Mars and Venus (see below, pp. 81 ff.), or of Saturn eating his children (p. 116 note 2).

hand but return to the giver', and although 'there is a higher dignity in the one that gives', the circle must never be interrupted.[1]

A further moral was added by Servius, which, to judge by the frequency with which it was repeated—for example, by Fulgentius, Boccaccio, Perotti, and Spenser—, seems to have been regarded as singularly apt: 'That one of them is pictured from the back while the two others face us, is because for one benefit issuing from us two are supposed to return.'[2] When 'Calidore sees the Graces daunce' (*Faerie Queene* VI, x, 24), their choreography illustrates Servius:

> *And eeke themselues so in their daunce they bore,*
> *That two of them still forward seem'd to bee,*
> *But one still towards shew'd her selfe afore;*
> *That good should from us goe, then come in greater store.*[3]

The Gloss of the *Shepheardes Calender* gives a useful summary of Seneca's and Servius's arguments combined, and by now adorned with the names of Theodontius and Boccaccio:[4]

'*The Graces* . . . otherwise called Charites, that is thanks. Whom the Poetes feyned to be the Goddesses of al bountie and comeliness, which therefore (as sayth Theodontius) they make three, to wete, that men first ought to be gracious and bountiful to

[1] *De beneficiis* I, iii.

[2] Servius, *In Vergilii Aeneidem* I, 720.—Since a few quotations from this text were recently mistaken for an original invention by Beroaldus the Elder (*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XIII, p. 169), this famous Servius passage is cited here in full: 'ideo autem nudae sunt, quod gratiae sine fuco esse debent, ideo conexae, quia insolubiles esse gratias decet: Horatius "segnesque nodum solvere Gratiae". Quod vero una aversa pingitur, duae nos respicientes, haec ratio est, quia profecta a nobis gratia duplex solet reverti.' Characteristic quotations in Fulgentius, *Mythologiae* II, iv; *Scriptores rerum mythicarum latini tres* (Bode) II, 36; III, 11, 2; Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum* V, xxxv; Niccolò Perotti, *Cornucopiae* (1489), fol. 121^{v}, and (1499), p. 213; Ripa, *Iconologia*, s.v. 'Gratie'; Spenser, *Faerie Queene* VI, x, 24. An instructive case is Antonius Laelius Podager's copy of Jacobus Mazochius, *Epigrammata antiquae urbis* (1521), Cod. Vat. lat. 8492, fol. 105^{v}. While rigorously correcting the inscriptions and illustrations in Mazochius, Podager inserted the moralization from Servius under a woodcut representing the nude group of the three Graces in the collection Podocataro: 'Gratiae nudae finguntur, quia sine fuco esse gratiae debent. Ideo autem conexae quia insolubiles esse oportet. Quod vero una aversa pingitur, duae nos respiciunt, est quia profecta a nobis gratia duplex solet reverti. Ser.' On Ludovico Podocataro and his collection, see Lanciani, *op. cit.*, p. 204; also *Corp. Inscr. Lat.* VI^{1}, no. 548, which says that the group was a relief (*tabula marmorea*).

[3] In the second line, the word 'forward', which appears in Spenser's own edition of 1596, and also in that of 1609, was changed by later editors into 'froward', although this is incompatible with the moral of the last line and with the gloss on *April* in the *Shepheardes Calender*, quoted below. The Variorum Edition of the *Faerie Queene* (Baltimore 1938) gives the original reading in the textual appendix (Book VI, pp. 466, 475) but retains the later emendation in the main text. On Spenser's sources see the excellent study by D. T. Starnes, 'Spenser and the Graces', *Philological Quarterly* XXI (1942), pp. 268–82. However, the specific conclusion drawn on p. 281 from the unique use of 'froward'='fromward' ('nowhere else in Spenser') does not hold if 'froward' is a mis-editing of 'forward'.

[4] On the mysterious Theodontius, a Campanian mythographer of uncertain date (*saec.* ix–xi), see J. Seznec, *La survivance des dieux antiques* (1940), p. 189; also the recent edition of the *Genealogia deorum* by V. Romano (1951), pp. 889 f., where 215 quotations from Theodontius are listed.

others freely, then to receive benefits at other mens hands curteously, and thirdly to requite them thankfully: which are three sundry Actions in liberalitye. And Boccace saith, that they be painted naked (as they were indeede on the tombe of C. Iulius Caesar), the one having her back toward us, and her face fromwarde, as proceeding from us: the other two toward us, noting double thanke to be due to us for the benefit we have done.'[1]

Although so casually juxtaposed in this fluent Gloss, the two views deriving from Seneca and Servius are not quite easy to reconcile. Seneca distinguished 'three sundry actions in liberality' (giving, receiving, and returning), but Servius allowed for only two (giving and returning), the second being enacted by a pair of figures. Like Seneca he pictured the Graces as interlaced (*conexae, quia insolubiles esse gratias decet*), but without insisting that they join their hands in a complete circle. Instead of a revolving series, *ille consertis manibus in se redeuntium chorus*, he saw them as an antithetical group: *una aversa pingitur, duae nos respicientes.*

As Chrysippus wrote in the third century B.C., and Seneca copied his observations, it is not surprising that the image described by Seneca should be of a considerably older type than that pictured by Servius (fourth century A.D.). Servius knew the Roman group which we ourselves regard as typical: a triad of naked figures in symmetrical postures (fig. 9); and he also gave a reason for their nakedness: 'ideo autem nudae sunt, quod gratiae sine fuco esse debent [they are naked because graces must be free of deceit].' From a passage in Pausanias it appears, however, that the representation of the Graces in that form was a relatively late invention. Writing in the second century A.D., he observed that in his own day the Graces were represented as nudes, but that he had not been able to find out which artist had introduced the innovation.[2] Seneca still imagined them as clothed: '. . . and nothing in them [i.e. benefits] should be bound or restricted. That is why they are clad in ungirdled garments, and these are transparent because benefits want to be seen.'[3]

[1] *April*, 109 ff. On the sources of the gloss see W. P. Mustard, 'E. K.'s Note on the Graces', *Modern Language Notes* XLV (1930), pp. 168 f.; D. T. Starnes, 'E. K.'s Classical Allusions Reconsidered', *Studies in Philology* XXXIX (1942), pp. 143–59. What is meant by the 'tomb of Caesar' is doubtful, since Caesar's ashes were supposed to be enclosed in the sphere on the top of the Vatican obelisk (cf. Hülsen, *La Roma antica di Ciriaco d'Ancona: Disegni inediti del secolo XV*, 1907, p. 32), which could hardly be confused with a sarcophagus showing the Graces.

[2] Pausanias IX, xxxv, 6 f. On the emergence of the new type, and its further history, cf. W. Deonna, 'Le groupe des trois Grâces nues et sa descendance' *Revue archéologique* XXXI (1930), pp. 274–332; also J. Six, 'La danse des Grâces nues', *Revue archéologique* XX (1924), pp. 287–91, with references to Callimachus and Euphorion, on which see now R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* I (1949), pp. 14 (fr. 7^{9}) and 317 (fr. 384^{44}). The latter fragment is of particular interest because, being among the earliest literary references to 'naked Graces', it plays on the idea that they should be dressed: οὐκέτι γυμνάς. Horace also knows both types: *Carmina* III, xix and IV, vii describe the Graces as nudes, but in I, xxx they wear loose garments ('et solutis Gratiae zonis').

[3] *De beneficiis* I, iii, 5.

Although the earlier group, with the figures clothed, has survived in several examples,[1] and was known to the Renaissance,[2] it never became as popular as the naked and symmetrical triad[3] which, once rediscovered, was quickly accepted as the classical formula.[4] Since the argument of Servius matches this group whereas Seneca's does not, one would expect Seneca henceforth to be overshadowed by Servius in the iconography of the Graces, but exactly the opposite occurred. Whether it was the greater weight of the Stoic's authority, or the superior moral of his argument, or the sheer accident that Alberti had recommended Seneca's text to the attention of painters before the classical group was rediscovered,[5] it appears that Seneca retained so strong a hold over the imagination that a friction resulted between the literary and the pictorial memory. As his arguments were read into the antithetical group, for which they had not been intended, they produced visual deformations of a curious kind. In the *Hieroglyphica* of Pierio Valeriano, for example, the designer, while obviously acquainted with the naked group, refashioned it after a late-mediaeval type which showed the first Grace from the back, the second full face, and the third in profile (figs. 17, 19).[6] The adoption of this bastard version, as is shown by the accompanying text of the *Hieroglyphica*, was inspired by a desire to match and amplify Seneca's argument: for after having quoted from *De bene-*

[1] E. Paribeni, 'Ninfe, Charites e Muse su rilievi neoattici', *Bollettino d'arte* XXXVI (1951), p. 108, figs. 4 f., replicas of 'Socrates's Graces'; cf. C. Picard, *Manuel d'archéologie grecque* II (1939), pp. 41 f., 90 f. Older illustrations in Daremberg-Saglio, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines* II, ii (1896), s.v. 'Gratiae', p. 1666.

[2] *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, fols. n viii^{r}–o i^{v}. In the Codex Pighianus (Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, MS lat., libr. pict. A, 61, fol. 320) the clothed group bears the inscription 'Gratiae Horatii saltantes'. O. Jahn, 'Die Zeichnungen antiker Monumente im Codex Pighianus', *Berichte der königl. sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften* XX (1868), p. 186, no. 49, refers the inscription to Horace I, iv, whereas A. Warburg, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike* (1932), p. 28, suggests Horace I, xxx. The same codex reproduces also the naked group, fols. 5 and 7; cf. Jahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 177 f., nos. 18 f.

[3] Cf. Warburg, *op. cit.*, p. 29 note 3 (a list of Renaissance quotations including Jacopo Bellini and Filarete); A. Frey-Sallmann, *Aus dem Nachleben antiker Göttergestalten* (1931), pp. 78 ff.; A. von Salis, *Antike und Renaissance* (1947), pp. 153 ff., 259.

[4] Its only rival was the plastic group of the Hecate-type which, showing the Graces *dos-à-dos* and with hands interlocked, became the model for Pilon's group in the Louvre. See again *Hypnerotomachia*, fol. f i^{v}; further examples in Deonna, *op. cit.*, pp. 318 f. In several Renaissance books (for example Cartari, *Imagini de i dei de gli antichi*, 1556, p. 534, but already in a Mainz print of 1492, illustrated in Seznec, *op. cit.*, fig. 95) the Hecate-type is reproduced in a frontal perspective which likens it to the familiar triad of Servius: *una aversa pingitur, duae nos respicientes.*

[5] *De pictura* III.

[6] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 143 (Commentary on *Les échecs amoureux*), detail from fol. 36^{v}: *Apollo and the three Graces*, illumination ascribed to Robinet Testart. In the text accompanying the picture (fols. 37 ff.) the dancers are described as the nine Muses; but there can be no doubt that the illustrator meant to represent the three Graces. The image follows a tradition known to the Renaissance from Macrobius, *Saturnalia* I, xvii, 13 and Pausanias IX, xxxv, 3 (cf. Gafurius, *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum*, 1518, fol. 94^{r}: 'dextro insuper Apollinis lateri Graeci ipsi tres iuvenculas fingere soliti sunt quas Charites seu gratias vocant'), and recently traced back by Pfeiffer to an epigram by Callimachus (fr. 114) addressed to an archaic statue of the Delian Apollo ('The Image of the Delian Apollo and Apolline Ethics', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XV, 1952, pp. 20–32). In another illustration of the same French manuscript (fol. 104^{v}) the Graces recur as attendants of Venus, and here their roles and postures are discussed at length (fols. 108 ff.).

ficiis that the three Graces signify the three phases of liberality, the author continued as follows:

'That is said by Seneca. We believe, however, that we should also not pass by in silence that one Grace is pictured with averted and hidden face in order to indicate that he who gives a present must do it without ostentation. . . . The other Grace shows her face openly because he who receives a benefit should publicly show and declare it; and the third Grace shows one side of her face and hides the other, thus signifying that in the returning of benefits we should hide the restitution but exhibit the benefit obtained.'[1]

It would be hardly worth dwelling on such a pedantic elaboration, did it not supply the key to Correggio's splendid painting of the Graces in the Camera di San Paolo at Parma (fig. 16). That he imparted a whirling motion to an ancient group of static symmetry, was ascribed, on purely formal grounds, to a stray effect of the *Laocoon*. Be that as it may, in designing the fresco of the Graces, the imagination of Correggio was not driven along a tangent but remained centred in Seneca's idea of liberality. By representing one Grace straight from the front, another straight from the back, and a third one moving sideways, he characterized the last as the 'returning' Grace, while the 'giving' and the 'receiving' Graces are frontally juxtaposed. In strict conformity to the Stoic idea, the giving Grace appears as the most majestic ('there is a higher dignity in the one that gives'), the receiving Grace as more humble and dependent, and the returning Grace as deliberate. It is she who, turning her face frontward, balances the receptive Grace on the left by fully exhibiting the benefit obtained; and thus she restores the symmetry of the classical triad.

While the image appears like a free and spirited rendering of the ancient group by an imaginative painter who wished to remind us of his classical model without copying it too literally, every deviation from the model is dictated by a scrupulous regard for allegorical accuracy which has heightened the eloquence of expression. In contrast to the original design, in which all the figures were facing outward (fig. 9), Correggio's group is dominated by a centripetal movement: for 'the order of the benefit requires that it . . . return to the giver'; and although the hands of the figures again do not touch, and the group retains its antithetical character, the arms are so artfully entwined that the effect is exactly that of a circular dance as described by Seneca: *ille consertis manibus in se redeuntium chorus*. A forerunner of the Baroque in so many other respects, Correggio reveals here again an affinity with Rubens who was, it may be remembered

[1] Pierio Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, fol. 434^{v} (appendix by Celio Agostino Curione).

from his portrait-group of Lipsius and his friends as disciples of Seneca,[1] a professed Stoic, and often painted Seneca's Graces.[2]

Given the slightness of the theme, its persistent attraction for great artists would seem to call for an explanation. But it is not unusual that a seemingly trivial subject, which would be the undoing of any minor master, tempts the great magicians to try their hand at it because it tests their skill of transfiguration. It is perhaps worth recalling in this context that Goethe, who was not a Stoic but much attached to the Graces, turned Seneca's moral into rhymes of a wonderful freshness and felicity; and since these German Graces adorn a Renaissance pageant (*Faust* II, Act I), an excuse is offered for quoting them here:

Anmut bringen wir ins Leben;
Leget Anmut in das Geben.

Leget Anmut ins Empfangen,
Lieblich ist's den Wunsch erlangen.

Und in stiller Tage Schranken
Höchst anmutig sei das Danken.

Grace in giving, accepting, and returning—'three sundry actions in liberality'—could not be remembered with more grace and precision.

And yet, the more we are struck with the ubiquity of Seneca's Graces, the more we are left with a final doubt. 'Stoic Liberality' is an intelligible concept, but 'Stoic Graces' sound like a contradiction in terms. How could a Stoic think of such a pleasing image? Did not Seneca wish, in an incidental clause, he could 'leave these ineptitudes to the poets'? While there is no question that the Renaissance learned about the Graces from Seneca, and that Seneca borrowed the image from Chrysippus, it may be important to remember that among the lost works by Epicurus listed in the *Lives* of Diogenes Laertius, there is one with the title *De beneficiis et gratia* (Περὶ δώρων καὶ χάριτος);[3] and since Diogenes Laertius further records that 'Carneades called Chrysippus the literary parasite of Epicurus because he wrote on every subject that Epicurus had treated before him',[4] one may well wonder whether Chrysippus's argument about the Graces, which was so faithfully repeated by Seneca, was not first prompted by his emulation of Epicurus. A trace of an Epicurean argument on the Graces is preserved in Plutarch's *Moralia*,[5] which is quoted here from the Renaissance translation of Xylander:

[1] Palazzo Pitti, Florence.
[2] Examples in the Prado and the Uffizi.
[3] Diogenes Laertius X, 28.
[4] *Ibid.* X, 26.
[5] *Cum principibus philosophandum esse* 3 (*Moralia* 778E).

'At vero Epicurus . . . beneficium dare non modo pulchrius sed etiam iucundius esse ait quam accipere. Nihil enim tam est ferax gaudii atque gratia (χαρᾶς γὰρ οὐδὲν οὕτω γόνιμόν ἐστιν ὡς χάρις); et sapuit qui Gratiis nomina imposuit, Aglaiae, Euphrosynes, et Thaliae . . .'[1]

The fame of this passage in the Renaissance is attested by an antiquarian eclectic, Caelius Rhodiginus, who opened his *Lectiones antiquae* with it.[2] Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to surmise that in collating Seneca with Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius, a Renaissance humanist might easily have reached the same conclusion as Gassendi,[3] or as the author of a nineteenth-century treatise entitled *De Seneca Epicureo*;[4] namely, that Seneca had preserved for posterity some of the gracious features of his enemy Epicurus. 'Miramur Stoicum Senecam', wrote Usener in the preface to his edition of the Epicurean fragments, 'quod philosophi adversarii de cupiditatibus, de fortuna, de morte sententias tam studiose tractat',[5]—to which might be added *et sententiam de gratia.*

[1] Venice 1572, p. 279; cf. Usener, *Epicurea* (1887), fr. 544.

[2] Basle 1517, fol. α-3[r]. The use of an Epicurean phrase at the head of a learned compendium expressed the author's faith in the pleasure and utility of learning; compare the title of Giorgio Valla's encyclopaedia, *De expetendis et fugiendis rebus* (1501), which is a Ciceronian translation, taken from *De finibus* I, 14, of Epicurus's title Περὶ αἱρέσεων καὶ φυγῶν (Diogenes Laertius X, 27).

[3] *De vita et moribus Epicuri* II, vi (*Opera* V, 1658, p. 190).

[4] O. Weissenfels (1886), cited by Usener, *op. cit.*, p. lvii note 1.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. lvii.

CHAPTER III

THE MEDAL OF PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

While the triad of the Graces signified liberality to the Stoics, for the Neoplatonists it was a symbol of love, inviting celestial meditations. As the Graces were described and pictured as attendants of Venus, it seemed reasonable to infer that they unfold her attributes: for it was an axiom of Platonic Theology that every god exerts his power in a triadic rhythm. 'He that understands profoundly and clearly', wrote Pico della Mirandola in his *Conclusiones*, 'how the unity of Venus is unfolded in the trinity of the Graces, and the unity of Necessity in the trinity of the Fates, and the unity of Saturn in the trinity of Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, knows the proper way of proceeding in Orphic theology.'[1]

In this riddling sentence the words 'Orphic theology' refer to the *Theologia Platonica* as expounded by Iamblichus and Proclus. 'All theology among the Greeks', wrote Proclus, 'is sprung from the mystical doctrine of Orpheus. First Pythagoras was taught the holy rites concerning the gods by Aglaophamus; next Plato took over the whole lore concerning these matters from the Pythagorean and Orphic writings.'[2] Marsilio Ficino, who chose to conclude that legendary list with his own name,[3] explicitly referred to Orpheus as *cuius theologiam secutus est Plato.*[4] And the tradition was stressed also by Pico della Mirandola. 'It is written by Iamblichus', he said, 'that Pythagoras took the Orphic Theology as a model after which he patterned and shaped his own philosophy. And for that reason alone are the sayings of Pythagoras called sacred, that

[1] *Conclusiones . . . de modo intelligendi hymnos Orphei*, no. 8.

[2] Proclus, *In Platonis theologiam* I, vi, ed. A. Portus (1618), p. 13 = Kern, *Orphicorum fragmenta*, p. 77, no. 250; tr. T. Taylor, *The Six Books of Proclus on the Theology of Plato* I (1816), p. 16. See also Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus*, p. 252, whose translation is quoted above.

[3] Letter to Cavalcanti, *Opera*, p. 634. The genealogy Orpheus-Aglaophamus-Pythagoras-Plato reappears in the prefaces to Ficino's commentaries on Plotinus (*ibid.*, p. 1537) and Hermes Trismegistus (*ibid.*, p. 1836). The ancient sources criticized in Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, p. 723; for Ficinian Orphica, *ibid.*, pp. 956 ff.; recently D. P. Walker, 'Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XVI (1953), pp. 100, 105.

[4] *In Philebum Platonis* I, xi (*Opera*, p. 1216).

they derive from the Orphic initiations, from which flowed, as from a fountainhead, the secret doctrine of numbers and whatever was great and sublime in Greek philosophy.'[1] If Pico went so far as to substitute 'Orphic' for 'Pythagorean' and 'Platonic', it was because he held, not unlike Thomas Taylor in the eighteenth century,[2] that the theology transmitted from the Pythagoreans to Plato was poetically foreshadowed in the Orphic Hymns, and that their sequence and imagery could be completely explained as a mystical expression, suitably veiled, of the theorems recorded by Proclus.[3]

To expound the system in all its ramifications, Pico required several hundred *Conclusiones*, each about as cryptic as the one just quoted. Fortunately we need not traverse the entire range of his or Ficino's philosophical mythology to understand the role assigned in it to the Graces. All we must remember is that the bounty bestowed by the gods upon lower beings was conceived by the Neoplatonists as a kind of overflowing (*emanatio*), which produced a vivifying rapture or conversion (called by Ficino *conversio*, *raptio*, or *vivificatio*) whereby the lower beings were drawn back to heaven and rejoined the gods (*remeatio*).[4] The munificence of the gods having thus been unfolded in the triple rhythm of *emanatio*, *raptio* and *remeatio*, it was possible to recognize in this sequence the divine model of what Seneca had defined as the circle of grace: giving, accepting, and returning.[5]

[1] *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, pp. 160 ff.; after Iamblichus, *De vita pythagorica* XXVIII, 145–7; 151.

[2] *The Mystical Initiations: or Hymns of Orpheus with a preliminary Dissertation on the Life and Theology of Orpheus*, 1787.

[3] Hence in Pico's *Nongentae conclusiones* some of the fifty-five *Conclusiones secundum Proclum* can serve as a commentary on the *Conclusiones de modo intelligendi hymnos Orphei*. No. 24 of the first group, for example, explains no. 8 in the second.

[4] Ficino, *In Plotinum* I, iii (*Opera*, p. 1559): 'de trinitate producente, convertente, perficiente'. A profusion of synonyms for the same sequence in *De amore* II, i–ii (*ibid.*, pp. 1323 f.): 'creat-rapit-perficit', 'incipit-transit-desinit', 'effluit-refluit-profluit', etc., all of them describing a triadic cycle which 'returns to the source from which it flowed': *in idem, unde manavit, iterum remeat*. In his commentaries on the *Timaeus* (*ibid.*, p. 1440) and on Plato's *Second Letter* (*ibid.*, p. 1531) Ficino associates the cycle with a triad of causes: *causa efficiens*, *causa exemplaris* and *causa finalis*—a terminology borrowed from Proclus, *In Timaeum* 1C–D (Diehl), to which Ficino goes back repeatedly; e.g. *Theologia Platonica* XVIII, i (*Opera*, p. 397); *Orphica comparatio solis ad Deum* (*ibid.*, p. 826); also *In Epistolas divi Pauli* vii (*ibid.*, p. 437), where, in discoursing 'de triplici cognitione divina quasi coelo trino', Ficino refers back to the *Timaeus* and to Plato's *Letters*: 'Triplicem hunc ordinem causae penes Deum Plato noster . . . declaravit . . . dum inquit, ex ipso, et per ipsum, et in ipsum omnia.' The same triad in Pico, *De ente et uno* viii (ed. Garin, p. 426), but with a characteristic correction of *penes* into *post*: 'Omnia quae sunt post Deum habent causam efficientem, exemplarem et finalem. Ab ipso enim, per ipsum et ad ipsum omnia.' On the three 'basic causes' in Proclus (ἀρχικαὶ αἰτίαι) and their relation to Aristotle's four, see Dodds's commentary on Proclus, *The Elements of Theology* (1933), pp. 240 f., prop. 75, with reference to Seneca, *Epistolae* 65, 8. A certain sleight of hand is unmistakable in the shift of accent by which Ficino adapts the triadic rhythm of Proclus to the Epistles of Paul and Augustine's *De Trinitate*; see next note.

[5] Neither Ficino's nor Pico's triadic arguments agree literally with the authentic Neoplatonism of Porphyry, Iamblichus, or Proclus because both incline to read an 'outgoing' tendency into the first phase, perhaps because they think, in a Judeo-Christian way, of the first cause primarily as creator. As a result, 'procession from the cause' appears to them as the first phase, 'rapture by the cause' as the second, and 'return to the cause' as the third; and since 'rapture by the cause' is already a phase of reversal (ἐπιστροφή), and as such comparable to what Proclus calls ὄρεξις (cf. *Elements of Theology*, prop. 31: πρὸς δ δὲ πρῶτον ἡ ὄρεξις, πρὸς τοῦτο

If we further consider that all communion between mortals and gods was established, according to Plato, through the mediation of Love, it becomes clear why in Ficino's and Pico's system the entire Greek pantheon began to revolve around Venus and Amor. All the parts of the splendid machine (*machinae membra*), Ficino wrote, 'are fastened to each other by a kind of mutual charity, so that it may justly be said that love is the perpetual knot and link of the universe: *amor nodus perpetuus, et copula mundi.*'[1] Although Venus remained one deity among others, and as such the bestower only of particular gifts, she defined, as it were, the universal system of exchange by which divine gifts are graciously circulated. The image of the Graces, linked by the knot of mutual charity (*segnesque nodum solvere Gratiae*),[2] supplied a perfect figure by which to illustrate the dialectical rhythm of Ficino's universe. His villa at Careggi, the seat of the Platonic academy, seemed to him predestined by its very name to become *Charitum ager*, the soil of the Graces: 'Quid enim gratius quam in Charegio, hoc est, gratiarum agro, una cum Cosmo gratiarum patre versari?'[3] Perhaps because Plato had advised Xenocrates that he should 'sacrifice to the Graces',[4] Ficino worshipped them as an exemplary triad, the archetype after which all the other triads of Neoplatonism appeared to be modelled. No matter whether he was discussing the logical triad of *species-numerus-modus*, or the theological triad of Mercury-Apollo-Venus, or the moral triad of *Veritas-Concordia-Pulchritudo*—since every one of these groups was governed by the law of procession, rapture and reversal, Ficino did not hesitate to compare all of them in turn to the Graces, calling them 'quasi Gratiae tres se invicem complectentes', or 'quasi Gratiae tres inter se concordes atque conjunctae', or 'tamquam Venus tribus stipata Gratiis', etc.[5] Apparently he felt none of the scruples which might

ἡ ἐπιστροφή), Pico is quite consistent in distinguishing within a triad the 'two reverting' phases from the 'one proceeding' (*Commento* II, xv; ed. Garin II, xvii, p. 509). But in Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 35 (ed. Dodds, pp. 38 f.), the sequence reads: (1) inherence in the cause, (2) procession from the cause, (3) reversal to the cause; and that is the original Neoplatonic scheme. It is obvious that the latter could not be assimilated to the argument of the three Graces, the use of which by Ficino and Pico is further proof of a bias in their reading of Neoplatonic texts.

[1] *De amore* III, iii.

[2] Horace, *Carmina* III, xxi.

[3] *Epistolarium* I, *Opera*, p. 608.

[4] Diogenes Laertius IV, 6. The Graces were associated with Plato on two further occasions: Speusippus' gift of a group of the Graces to Plato's Museion in the Academy (*ibid.* IV, 1), and the tradition, presumably apocryphal, that the sculptor Socrates who made the group of the Graces for the Acropolis, was identical with the philosopher (*ibid.* II, 19; also Pausanias IX, xxxv, 7: 'Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus'). It is of this group that Pausanias says (IX, xxxv, 3): 'by their side are celebrated mysteries which must not be divulged to the many.'

[5] *Opera*, pp. 1561, 536, 1559, etc. Even the spiritual organs of 'eye, ear, and mind', which Ficino distinguished from the bodily senses of touch, smell, and taste, he identified (*De amore* I, iv and V, ii) with the three Graces: 'Atque haec tres illae gratiae sunt, de quibus sic Orpheus', etc. An echo of the same argument in Lorenzo de' Medici, *L'altercazione* II, 16–18: 'ecco in un punto sente, intende e mira / l'occhio, la mente nobile e l'orecchio / chi suona, sua dottrina e la sua lira.' In a letter on the theme 'Sola illa gratia non senescit quae a rebus non senescentibus oritur' (*Opera*, p. 828), Ficino managed to extract a combination of *splendor, laetitia*, and *viriditas* (which correspond to the names given to the three Graces in the Orphic Hymns LX, 3, as translated by Ficino, *De amore* V, ii) from an

have beset a less confident dialectician. It is obvious, for example, that if the three Graces were subordinated to Venus in a strictly logical sense, the triad Mercury-Apollo-Venus could not be co-extensive with that of the Graces. Ficino was fully aware of this question but he did not consider it a difficulty because, in the Neoplatonic system, the structure of the whole is repeated in every part. Any smaller or subordinate unit can therefore serve as an image or mirror of the larger, like Leibniz's *miroirs vivants de l'univers*. On one occasion, having identified the three Graces with *animus-corpus-fortuna*,[1] Ficino proceeded, in the very same sentence, to distinguish within the sphere of *animus* between the three Graces of *sapientia*, *eloquentia*, and *probitas*.[2] However objectionable as logic, Ficino's circular regressions conformed to a principle which Proclus had defined in the *Elements of Theology* (Proposition 67) as ὅλον ἐν τῷ μέρει, that is, 'whole in the part';[3] and from it Proclus himself had drawn the kind of lesson which Ficino applied so persistently: 'Whichever among these you assume, it is the same with the others, because all of them are in each other, and are rooted in the One.'[4]

Pico restated the principle in his *Conclusiones . . . secundum Proclum*, no. 17: 'Granting . . . that the divine hierarchies are distinct, it must yet be understood that all are contained in all according to their particular modes.'[5] In the *Heptaplus*, a triadic account of the biblical Creation was expanded by Pico according to the same scheme: 'Quidquid in omnibus simul est mundis, id et in singulis continetur, neque est aliquis unus ex eis, in quo non omnia sint quae sunt in singulis.'[6] A single triad, however limited in range, could therefore serve as a cipher for the universe, because the divine trinity had left its traces on every part of the creation. 'Divinam trinitatem in rebus

elegy of Tibullus (I, iv, 37): *solis aeterna est Phoebo Bacchoque iuventus* (Phoebus = *splendor*; Bacchus = *laetitia*; Iuventus = *viriditas*).

[1] Cf. Plato, *Epistles* VIII, 355B.

[2] *Opera*, p. 890, a letter about Pico, addressed to Salviati and Benivieni. Ficino complicated matters further by equating the three Graces here also with Phoebus-Mercury-Jupiter, associating Phoebus with *animus* as such, Mercury with *animus* employing *corpus*, and Jupiter with *fortuna* guided by *consilium*, thus obtaining *sapientia-eloquentia-probitas* which, though explicitly qualified as attributes of *animus*, are again equated with Phoebus-Mercury-Jupiter and thus identified with the three Graces. It is obvious that the involutions are deliberate and jocose; they form part of a mystifying epistolary style which is meant to amuse the recipients, who would recognize, for example, in the equation of Jupiter with *consilium* a famous mystery about divine names on which Pico, in particular, had paradoxical things to say (see below, p. 49 note 1, also p. 45 note 1).

[3] *Elements of Theology*, ed. Dodds, p. 64, prop. 67.

[4] *In Parmenidem* VI (Cousin[2] 1050, 9 ff.); cf. Taylor, *Proclus on the Theology of Plato*, p. xxv f.

[5] 'Licet, ut tradit Theologia, distinctae sint divinae hierarchiae, intelligendum est tamen omnia in omnibus esse modo suo.' See Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 103: πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν, οἰκείως δὲ ἐν ἑκάστῳ (=*In Timaeum* 3D and 147B), with Dodds's commentary, p. 254; also L. J. Rosán, *The Philosophy of Proclus* (1949), p. 96.

[6] Second preface to *Heptaplus* (ed. Garin, p. 188): 'Quam Anaxagorae credo fuisse opinionem . . . explicatam deinde a Pythagoricis et Platonicis.' The reference to Anaxagoras (=Diels, fr. 11 f.) also in Cusanus, *De docta ignorantia* II, v, where the principle 'all is in all' is shown to entail its opposite, namely, that no two things can be exactly equal. The argument resembles Leibniz's attempt to derive the *principium individuationis* from the law of sufficient reason. An interesting expansion of 'all is in all' in Leonardo da Vinci's Notebooks, headed 'Anasagora', *Codice Atlantico* fol. 385v, in J. P. Richter, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci* II (1939), no. 1473.

cunctis agnosces', wrote Ficino;[1] and Pico repeated the same idea in a more precise formulation: 'Est trinitatis divinae in creatura multiplex vestigium.'[2] The phrasing recalled a passage in St Augustine which it was easy to transfer to the *Charites* or Graces: 'Tria in Charitate, velut vestigium Trinitatis.'[3]

* * * * *

The doctrine of the 'vestiges of the Trinity' belonged to the mysterious revelations which Christians and pagans were believed to have in common. Augustine had phrased the doctrine with perfect clarity: 'Oportet . . . ut Creatorem . . . Trinitatem intelligamus, cuius in creatura, quomodo dignum est, apparet vestigium.'[4] And Augustine had also defined the difference between the Holy Trinity itself and its vestiges by showing that in the latter the three aspects derived from the deity become unequal to each other and separable.[5] What would have been Arianism if applied to the Holy Trinity was thus orthodox Augustinianism in its *vestigia*—an important distinction, too often overlooked, which justified certain triadic innovations in Renaissance hagiography,[6] and inspired the fervour with which Renaissance humanists pursued the rudimentary trinities among the pagans.[7] Both Ficino and Pico, for ex-

[1] *Opera*, p. 701.

[2] Preface to *Heptaplus* VI (ed. Garin, p. 308).

[3] *De Trinitate* VIII, x, 14.

[4] *Ibid.* VI, x, 12. The doctrine is systematically developed in Books IX–XV.

[5] 'Aliud est itaque trinitas res ipsa, aliud imago trinitatis in re alia. . . . Ista vero tria quae sunt in impari imagine, . . . inter se . . . magnitudinibus separantur. . . . Et quando inter se aequalia fuerint . . . , nec tunc . . . aequatur creatura Creatori . . .' (*ibid.* XV, xxiii, 43). A characteristic Renaissance statement in Francesco Giorgio, *Harmonia mundi totius* (1525) I, iii, 2 (fol. 40^{r}), 'Quanto ordine a trino Deo per ternarium fiat in fabricata omnia progressus'; also I, i, 4 (fols. 5^{v} f.), with reference to Augustine. Although attacked as a scholastic monstrosity by Serveto, *De trinitatis erroribus* (1531), the Trinity nevertheless entered into Serveto's writings in the Joachimite form of the 'three reigns' on earth, which he called *trinitatis oeconomia* (cf. D. Cantimori, *Italienische Haeretiker der Spätrenaissance*, tr. W. Kaegi, 1949, pp. 40 f., 422); nor was the exclusive acceptance of this vestigial form illogical in a professed anti-Athanasian: for Augustine himself had explained at length that the *vestigia trinitatis*, being both distant and related to the Divine Trinity because they are its derivatives, cannot possibly show the three in one.

[6] For example, the *trinubium Annae* (cf. Wind, 'The Genealogy of Christ in Renaissance Theology', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* XXVI, 1947, p. 220); also the cult, later sanctioned by the Counter-reformation, of the Holy Family as a 'trinity on earth' (on which see Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentaria in quattuor evangelia*, 1660, p. 53, with quotation from Gerson; H. Usener, *Dreiheit*, 1903, pp. 45 f.; E. Mâle, *L'art religieux après le concile de Trente*, 1932, pp. 312 f.); and above all the cult of St Anne with Mary and Christ ('Heilige Anna Selbdritt'). Since Savonarola explicitly taught the doctrine of the vestiges of the Trinity (*Trionfo della croce* III, iii), it is significant that in Fra Bartolommeo's large altarpiece for the Sala del Gran Consiglio in Florence (now in San Marco) the triadic group of St Anne, which occupies the centre, is crowned with an image of the Holy Trinity in the shape of a triple head. On the widespread use of this form in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries see R. Pettazoni, 'The Pagan Origin of the Three-headed Representation of the Christian Trinity', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* IX (1946), p. 151; G. J. Hoogewerff, 'Vultus trifrons', *Rendiconti della pontificia accademia romana di archeologia* XIX (1942–3), pp. 216–20, where the chief Renaissance examples are surveyed. The form was condemned by a bull of Urban VIII in 1628.

[7] On Hermes Trismegistus and Orpheus as prophets of the Christian trinity, see Gyraldus, *Opera* I, 309; II, 75, 77. Also *ibid.*, I, 197 on 'the famous oracle of Serapis' (*oraculum quod celebre Serapidis fuit*) concerning the *mysterium trinitatis*; and *ibid.*, II, 673 f. on Pythagorean and Platonic trinitarians. A concise statement by Ficino in a chapter 'De rationibus trinitatis', with references to Orpheus, Plato and Zoroaster: 'Dixerint isti quidem quod potuerunt, et id quidem adiuvante Deo' (*In*

ample, denied that the second hypostasis of Plotinus could be simply equated with the second person of the Holy Trinity;[1] yet neither Ficino nor Pico—nor Rhodiginus—was deterred by that concession from tracing the *vestigia trinitatis* through all the levels of the Neoplatonic system, and all the hierarchies of pagan myth.[2] Nicolaus Cusanus, whose preoccupation with Proclus's triadic constructions never caused anyone to doubt his orthodoxy, not only upheld the theory in *De docta ignorantia* ('sunt in unaquaque re trinitatis vestigia')[3] but also cited it in his popular tracts and sermons: 'In omni creato videmus trinum et unum deum.'[4] And the strictly Augustinian Egidio da Viterbo, in his huge commentary *In Librum Sententiarum ad mentem Platonis*,[5] while taking his text from Peter Lombard, traced the 'vestiges of the Trinity'[6] through Plato's dialogues and through a large series of pagan fables, thus producing a remarkable fusion of Augustine's *De Trinitate* and Proclus's *Theologia Platonica*.

Pico was particularly fond of observing that the three Delphic precepts inscribed on the temple of Apollo (μηδὲν ἄγαν—γνῶθι σεαυτόν—εἰ)[7] correspond exactly to the three phases of angelic ecstasy which St Paul had experienced 'when he was himself exalted to the third heaven', and which were described by his disciple Dionysius as *purgari-illuminari-perfici*.[8] But other pagan symbols suggestive of a triple initiation were available in abundance, and eagerly quoted. The tripod of Apollo,[9] the

Epistolas divi Pauli II, *Opera*, p. 430). See also Rhodiginus, *Antiquae lectiones* XII, ix, and Agrippa of Nettesheim, *De occulta philosophia* III, viii: 'Quid de divina trinitate veteres senserint philosophi'.

[1] Pico, *Commento* I, iv (ed. Garin I, v, pp. 466 f.); Ficino, *In Parmenidem* LV (*Opera*, p. 1169), *In Timaeum* IX (*ibid.*, p. 1442), *In Sextam Epistulam Platonis* (*ibid.*, p. 1533); also Rhodiginus, *Antiquae lectiones* IX, xvii, pp. 442 f.

[2] Exactly to what extent Ficino and Pico were indebted in these speculations to Pletho, whom Pico quotes in the *Commento* as *approbatissimo Platonico* (ed. Garin, p. 510, apparently overlooked by B. Knös, 'Gémiste Pléthon et son souvenir', *Lettres d'humanité* IX, 1950, pp. 97–184), would deserve further study. A summary of the relevant points in M. V. Anastos, 'Pletho's Calendar and Liturgy', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* IV (1948), pp. 289–99: 'Triadic division of the universe, and Pletho's use of Proclus'. The anti-Christian policy imputed to Pletho by his adversaries and still accepted by many eminent historians, seems to me disproved by three facts: (1) that he was among the Byzantine emissaries to the Council of 1439 for the reunion of the Greek and Roman Churches; (2) that Cardinal Bessarion remained all his life his devoted disciple; (3) that his presence in Florence inspired the sponsorship of a distinctly Christian Platonism by the Medici (cf. Ficino's preface to Plotinus, in *Opera*, p. 1537). The contrary view has been recently reaffirmed by F. Masai, *Pléthon et le Platonisme de Mistra* (1956), pp. 321 f.

[3] I, xxiv ('Et haec est sententia Aurelii Augustini'); also II, vii, *De trinitate universi*, on which cf. R. Haubst, *Das Bild des Einen und Dreieinen Gottes in der Welt nach Nikolaus von Kues* (1952).

[4] *Opera* (1514) II, fol. 144^{v} ('Ex sermone Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus'); cf. also *De pace seu concordantia fidei* §8, *Opera* I, fol. 117^{v}.

[5] Cod. Vat. lat. 6325.

[6] *Ibid.*, fols. 45 f.

[7] *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, p. 124.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 112.

[9] The tripod as a trinitarian symbol in Iamblichus, *De vita pythagorica* XXVIII, 152; a mere hint in Plutarch, *On the* εἰ *at Delphi* 2 (*Moralia* 385D). For Renaissance illustrations see Tritonius, *Melopoiae* (1507), tailpiece, our fig. 70; also a curious politico-Neoplatonic woodcut, invented by Celtes and engraved by Burgkmair, in which a complete system of the arts and sciences unfolds, in the shape of a double eagle, from the imperial tripod of Maximilian-Apollo, the base of the cumbersome structure being formed by the triadic Judgment of Paris. Reproduced in A. Burkhard, *Hans Burgkmair d. Ä.* (1932), pl. ix, no. 10. In the *Libellus de deorum imaginibus* (Cod. Vat. Reg. lat. 1290, fol. 1^{v}; on which see H. Liebeschütz, *Fulgentius metaforalis*,

signum triceps of Serapis,[1] the triple-headed Cerberus,[2] the three Fates as counterparts to the three Graces,[3] the three sons of Saturn or of Osiris,[4] the Chaldean trinity quoted in Plutarch,[5] the three names given in Ovid's *Fasti* to the god Dius Fidius ('nomina terna

1926, p. 118, fig. 27), Apollo exhibits his triadic power by wearing the tripod on his head: 'Iste super caput portabat tripodem aureum.' The unconventional headgear recalls some late-antique coins and gems which enjoyed a fairly wide circulation as amulets (Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, 1950, pl. x, nos. 217–19A). Perhaps aware of the confusion, Perotti, *Cornucopiae*, s.v. 'tripus Apollinis', cites Aristophanes' humorous use of στέμματα (*Plutus* 39) for describing the seat of the Pythian oracle: 'per stemmata enim . . . cortinam intelligit, quod vas id rotundum est, tres pedes habens ad coronae similitudinem.'

[1] See Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege* (1930), pp. 1–35. The chief ancient text on the *signum triceps* of Serapis is Macrobius, *Saturnalia* I, xx, where the three heads signify the three parts of Time, whence Petrarch, *Africa* III,162 ff.: *fugientia tempora signant.* To the moral sources cited by Panofsky, which show the image to be an emblem of Prudence or Good Counsel because that virtue consists in mastering the three parts of Time, two mystical sources should be added: (1) the trinitarian oracle of Serapis which Gyraldus (*Opera* I, 197, see above, p. 43 note 7) quotes both in Latin and in Greek; and (2) the Platonic-Augustinian tradition of the 'vestiges of the Trinity', which extended to the three parts of Time, as for example in Gianfrancesco Pico, *De rerum praenotione* I, viii (*Opera*, 1601, p. 264): 'quandam etiam beatissimae Trinitatis imaginem . . . in anima ex praeteriti, praesentis atque futuri temporis notitia pervestigabimus', with reference to Good Counsel (*consilium*) as defined by Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I, iii (συμβουλή). In the *Hypnerotomachia*, whose large collection of triadic images includes also the *signum triceps* of Serapis (fols. x viii^{v}–y ii^{r}), the Holy Trinity is again traced in the three parts of Time (fol. h v^{v}). It follows that in the famous triple-headed allegory attributed to Titian (formerly Francis Howard Collection, London; Panofsky, *op. cit.*, fig. 1), the resemblance of Good Counsel to the divine Trinity is not accidental; it is, in the language of Augustine, an *imago trinitatis in re alia.* In a hieroglyphic metal-cut by Holbein (*ibid.*, p. 27, fig. 21) the hand of God, issuing from a cloud, holds the triple-headed symbol of Serapis, a threatening apparition of *Consilium* in the sky. Perhaps it is relevant to the design that in comparing the Bible with Plato, Avicenna, and Dionysius the Areopagite, Pico found that *Consilium* is a true appellation of the supreme God who is hidden in darkness (*Conclusiones . . . de modo intelligendi hymnos Orphei*, nos. 15–17). On the medal of the doge Andrea Gritti by Giovanni Zacchi, a figure of Fortuna supported by the three-headed symbol of Serapis or *Consilium* bears the inscription DEI OPT MAX OPE (Habich, *Die Medaillen der italienischen Renaissance* [1924], pl. lxxv, 5; Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 27, fig. 20). The idea of triadic Time or Prudence as a vestige of the Godhead recalls Plato's theory, *Timaeus* 37D–38B, that the three parts of Time 'imitate Eternity', of which they provide a 'moving image' (εἰκὼ κινητόν τινα αἰῶνος). Hence Diogenes Laertius III, 106, was not, as has been supposed, ill-informed when he introduced triadic συμβουλία into his chapter on Plato. In *Timaeus* 72A, the distinction of two forms of foresight in man, intellectual and animal, located in head and liver and reflecting each other 'as in a mirror' while they determine 'a future or a past or a present evil or good', might well have suggested the monstrous superposition of an anthropomorphic over a theriomorphic trinity in the Serapis allegory ascribed to Titian.

[2] Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, Curione's appendix, fol. 436^{v}, Cerberus as 'triplex dei potestas'; cf. *Hypnerotomachia*, fol. p viii^{v}.

[3] The three Fates appear often as analogue to the Graces, for example Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals*, no. 860, medal of Andrea Capelli. They also answer each other in Correggio's Camera di San Paolo. For the theory behind assimilations of that kind, cf. Pico, *Commento* II, xxi (ed. Garin II, xxiv, pp. 516 f.): 'Per qual ragione si dica Venere imperare a tre fati', where the triple rule of the Fates is on the other hand compared to the 'three realms divided between the sons of Saturn'; also above, p. 39.

[4] On the three sons of Osiris—Anubis, Macedon, Hercules Aegyptius—see Lomazzo, *Trattato della pittura* (1584), p. 545. The chief 'Egyptian authority' responsible for this triad is the forger Annius of Viterbo, *Opera de antiquitatibus* (1545), fols. 65^{v}, 74^{v}, etc. Greek texts on Hercules Aegyptius listed in Hopfner, *Plutarch über Isis und Osiris* II (1941), p. 185 note 5.

[5] Ohrmazd-Mithra-Ahriman, from Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 46 (*Moralia* 369E); identified with the three Platonic hypostases by Ficino, *Theologia Platonica* IV, i (*Opera*, p. 130), *De amore* II, iv (*ibid.*, p. 1325); also by Francesco Giorgio, *Harmonia mundi* I, iii, 2, who introduces them as *superexcelsae trinitatis vestigium* (*ed. cit.*, fol. 40^{v}); whence Pontus de Tyard, *Discours philosophiques* (1587), fol. 301^{v}, as quoted by F. A. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century* (1947), p. 91; but the reflection (*ibid.*, note 6) that because Ahriman is a god of darkness and evil the idea of relating this triad to the Holy Trinity 'suggests a certain confusion of

fero')[1] the triple-headed Hecate,[2] the three goddesses in the Judgment of Paris,[3]—this seemingly haphazard recurrence of triads,[4] which extended from the Olympian regions to the infernal,[5] was taken to be a positive hint of a trinitarian theology among the pagans. And since Proclus had explained in the *Theologia Platonica* that the Greek gods commune with one another and with mortals through a triple rhythm by which they unfold their power, Ficino and Pico felt no hesitation in crediting Plato himself with this trinitarian theology, which they supposed that he had derived from Orpheus and Pythagoras. 'The Trinity', Ficino wrote in *De amore*, that is, in his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*,[6] 'was regarded by the Pythagorean philosophers as the measure of all things; the reason being, I surmise, that God governs things by threes, and that

thought amongst these Renaissance syncretists', ignores Augustine's important distinction between characteristics admissible in 'vestiges of the Trinity' and those belonging to the Holy Trinity itself. As late as 1655, an English poem addressed to Pope Alexander VII reads the vestiges of the Trinity into the Chigi coat-of-arms, 'Whose threefold scutchian from the Trinitie / Displayes three mightie powers *Heav'n Earth* and *Hell*' (cod. Barb. lat. 2181, fol. 48^{v}, published by J. McG. Bottkol, 'The Holograph of Milton's Letter to Holstenius', *Publ. of the Mod. Lang. Ass. of Am.* LXVIII, 1953, p. 619). Further speculations on the Chaldean trinity in Franciscus Patricius, *Zoroaster et eius cccxx oracula chaldaica* (1591), fol. 6, after Psellus.

[1] *Fasti* VI, 213–16. Interpreted as a trinitarian mystery by Petrus Apianus, *Inscriptiones sacrosanctae vetustatis* (1534), p. 271. Cf. P. L. Williams, 'Two Roman Reliefs in Renaissance Disguise', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* IV (1941), pp. 52 ff. A humorous adaptation in Alciati, *Emblemata* (1542), no. 95: 'Fidei symbolum'.

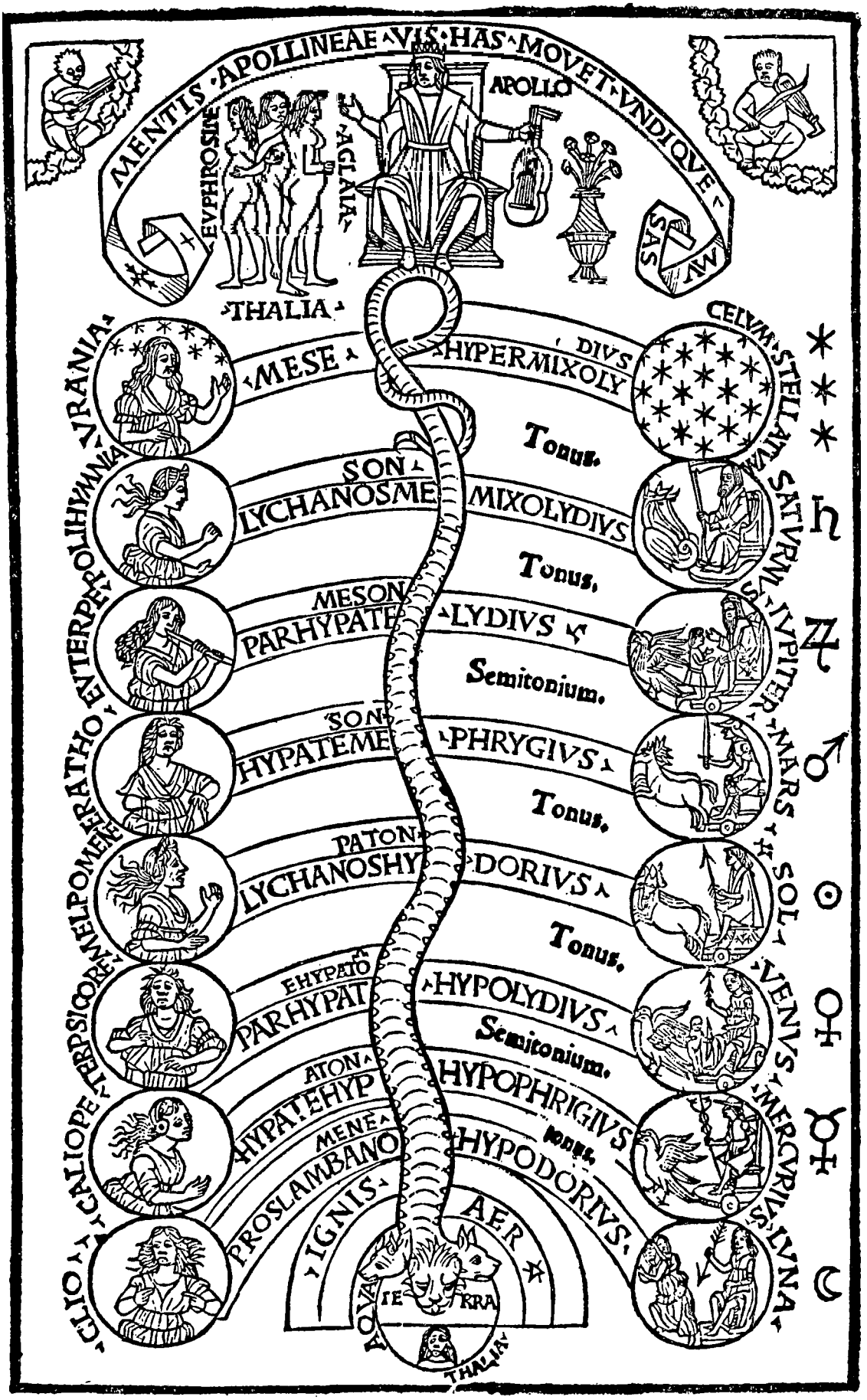
[2] Gyraldus II, 654 f. Cf. Servius, *In Bucolica* VIII, 75, on Virgil's phrase *numero deus impare gaudet*: 'Aut quemcunque superorum, iuxta Pythagoreos, qui ternarium numerum perfectum summo deo assignant, . . . aut revera Hecaten dicit, cuius triplex potestas esse perhibetur.'

[3] Allegorized in Sallustius, *Concerning the Gods and the Universe*, ed. Nock (1926), pp. 6 f. (§ iv); Fulgentius, *Mythologiae* II, i, etc.

[4] Usener, *Dreiheit, ein Versuch mythologischer Zahlenlehre* (1903), counted more than 120 triadic groupings in Greek myth and ritual, of which fifteen belong to Hesiod alone, but the purpose of his study, the reverse of Neoplatonism, was to prove that the number is meaningless (pp. 348 f., 358 ff.) and that its high religious estimation is left over from a time 'when the concept of number did not exceed three', the *trialis* (p. 360) serving as plural and indicating a maximum.

[5] Gafurius, in illustrating the music of the spheres (*Practica musice*, 1496, frontispiece), placed the triads of the Graces and of Serapis at opposite ends of the great cosmic scale which connects heaven and earth in the shape of a serpent (see the adjoining figure). As in Julian's *Hymn to Helios* (*Orationes* IV, 146C–D, 148D), the three Graces dance in heaven under the direct guidance of Apollo while his music animates the spheres, each of which is assigned to one of the nine Muses. The vase of flowers on Apollo's left probably signifies the νοῦς ὑλικός, associated by Macrobius with the celestial *crater* (*In Somnium Scipionis* I, xii) through which the divine spirit descends as far down as the φυτικόν, *id est, naturam plantandi et agendi corpora.* At the bottom of the scale, the trinity of Serapis hovers over the last and lowest of the musical emanations which is the realm of subterranean silence, as explained by Gafurius (*De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum*, 1518, fol. 93^{v}) who identifies the animal with Cerberus, and the muse of nocturnal silence with the 'surda Thalia', adding that on the authority of Cicero things in the earth are silent because the earth is immobile (*Macrobius, op. cit.* I, xxii–II, i). On Serapis as a god of the underworld and associated with silence, see also Gyraldus, *Opera* I, 197 ff., who, following Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 27 (*Moralia* 361 E), identifies him with Pluto. In this realm of death, where the sheer passage of all-devouring Time has become a vacant copy of eternity, like prime matter in the definition of Plotinus, 'a ghost that never stays yet can never vanish' (*Enneads* III, vi, 7, tr. Dodds), the triple-headed monster, *fugientia tempora signans*, still retains a shadowy vestige of that triadic dance which the Graces start under the direction of Apollo. The whole universe, from top to bottom, is thus permeated by the 'Pythian nomos', a triadic rhythm which Apollo himself is supposed to have initiated at Delphi when he battled against the python (see Warburg, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike*, pp. 283 f., 417–20.)

[6] II, i (*Opera*, p. 1323).



The Music of the Spheres. From Gafurius's *Practica musice*, 1496

also the things themselves are determined by threes. Hence that saying of Virgil's: *numero deus impare gaudet*. For the supreme maker first creates single things, then seizes them, and thirdly perfects them (*primo singula creat, secundo rapit,*[1] *tertio perficit*). And thus the single things also first flow from that perennial fountain as they are born, then they flow back to it as they seek to revert to their origin, and finally they are perfected after they have returned to their beginning. This was divined by Orpheus when he called Jupiter the beginning, the middle, and the end of the universe:[2] the beginning because he creates, the middle because he draws his creatures back to himself, the end because he perfects them as they return.'

Having learned of the pagan trinities in Italy, the German humanist Conrad Celtes chose a singularly pedantic and obvious way, but for that very reason instructive, of illustrating the Orphic theology in the *Melopoiae* by Tritonius.[3] He adopted the traditional iconographic type of the Holy Trinity combined with the Deesis, but substituted pagan figures for the Christian (figs. 70, 71). In the place of God the Father blessing Christ, we see Jupiter hovering over his son Apollo; and the dove of the Holy Ghost is replaced by the winged figure of Pegasus whose hoof brings forth the fountain of Helicon—'the spirit moving over the waters'. The Virgin Mary at Christ's side is replaced by the virgin-goddess Minerva, and the part of John the Baptist, the

[1] The verb *rapere*, so frequently used by Ficino to indicate the divine seizure which starts off the Platonic reversal (ἐπιστροφή), is a literal translation of ἁρπάζειν, which Proclus used in the same sense, *In Parmenidem* V (ed. Cousin[2], 1033, 27). It also occurs in a verse from the Chaldean Oracles (ed. Patricius, 1591, fol. 8[r]) cited and translated by Ficino, *Theologia Platonica* III, i (*Opera*, p. 117): ἥρπασεν = *rapuit*. The most famous instance is of course II Corinthians xii, 2–4. A complete definition in Agrippa of Nettesheim, *De occulta philosophia* (1533), p. 316: 'Raptus est abstractio et alienatio et illustratio animae a deo proveniens, per quem deus animam, a superis delapsam ad infera, rursus ab inferis retrahit ad supera.'

[2] The relevant verses are cited in full by Gyraldus in his *Syntagma* on Jupiter (*Opera* I, 75 f.), where he severely questions their authenticity. As a critique of the Platonic vagaries about Orpheus, coming from an author closely associated with Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, the passage is important: 'Citantur porro et alii versus his consimiles a Proclo, aliisque Platonicis, quos curiositatis gratia ascribam: nam plerisque mecum sentientibus, quid de huiusmodi Orphicis statuendum, parum adhuc liquet: praesertim cum neque Aristoteli, nec M. Ciceroni satis notus fuisse Orpheus videatur, ut qui de eo ambigue statuant.' Gyraldus's sceptical view of the Orphic poems, *quae fere dubia sunt omnia et incerta* (*De historia poetarum* ii, *op. cit.* II, 76), may explain his complete omission of the theories of Ficino and Pico from his account of the Orphic Hymns. His distrust of Ficino's philology was rather sharply expressed in his *Pythagorae symbolorum interpretatio* (*ibid.* II, 673) on the occasion of a Pythagorean symbol he had found listed in Ficino (cf. *Opera*, p. 1979) but nowhere else: 'This is either a symbol, or a riddle, or both, or perhaps neither, since only Marsilio Ficino has reported it among the symbols of Pythagoras.'

[3] That Celtes had planned the printing and illustration of the book of songs composed by Tritonius for the scanning of Horace's meters, is stated in the colophon: 'ductu Chunradi Celtis feliciter impressae, 1507'. F. v. Bezold, *Aus Mittelalter und Renaissance* (1918), pp. 82–152, 391–9, gives important details on Celtes as an 'inventor' of designs, e.g. note 223, letter from Celtes to Schreyer of 24 March 1495: 'See to it that the images are rendered by the painter in a philosophic and poetic style so that, when I come to you, I can pass judgment as to what should be added or left out.' On the *Melopoiae*, *ibid.*, p. 99. A distich inscribed on Burgkmair's woodcut of the Imperial Eagle with the Arts and Sciences (above, p. 44 note 9) celebrates the joint authorship of painter and poet: 'Burgkmair hanc acquilam depinxerat arte Johannes / Et Celtis pul[c]hram texuit historiam.'

forerunner and announcer, is taken over by the divine messenger, Hermes. Apollo, in the centre of the triads, is the poetic mediator and redeemer, his own trinitarian nature stressed by his attribute, the tripod. The composition is surrounded by the nine Muses who correspond to the nine angelic choirs of the celestial hierarchy.

It is doubtful, however, whether Celtes's rough simplicity in reducing the agreement between Orphic and Christian theology to a rigid diagram, would have pleased any Italian humanist. Far from hiding a divine secret, the choice of a familiar Christian pattern, filled in with equally familiar pagan figures, seemed to turn the mysteries inside out. Instead of inviting the spectator to seek for a hidden concordance, it provided him with a set of clear equations (Jupiter = God the Father; Apollo = Christ; Minerva = Mary; Hermes = St John; Pegasus = Dove of the Holy Spirit). Worst of all, from an Italian point of view, Celtes grouped the pagan figures in a conventional Christian composition: whereas the humanist artists of Italy strove to do the reverse,[1] to resuscitate and preserve the pagan form in all its seemingly un-Christian splendour, while reading into it a secret meaning consistent with Christian theology.[2] The patent ugliness of Celtes's design was thus due to the very cause which made it look unmysterious. One need but turn from this over-didactic woodcut to the image of the three Graces on Pico's medal, to see how an authentic pagan model could be used for a mystical evocation. For while the design was fashioned by the Florentine medallist as a deliberate replica of the antique group, it bears an inscription which unmistakably relates it to a trinitarian philosophy of love: PULCHRITUDO–AMOR–VOLUPTAS (fig. 10).[3]

[1] The only Italian example I know which approaches the Tritonius woodcut in syncretistic pedantry is a medallic image of Christ by Giovanni dal Cavino which bears the inscription PORUS CONSILII FILIUS; after *Symposium* 203B, where Poros, the drunken god of Affluence, is introduced as the 'son of Counsel'. Habich, *Die Medaillen der italienischen Renaissance*, p. 111, was rightly startled by this inauspicious appellation of Christ. But the argument is to be found in Pico, *Commento* II, xviii (ed. Garin II, xxi, p. 513), *Di Poro e perchè sia detto figluolo del Consiglio*: 'Since Poros is the affluence of the ideas which issue from the true God, he is called the son of Counsel by Plato, who imitates the sacred letters of the Hebrews, where that God is called by the same name, whence Dionysius the Areopagite says that Jesus Christ is called angel of Counsel and also messenger of God, meaning by Counsel nothing other than the first Father, God. In imitation of which Avicenna also called the first cause "counselling cause". . . .' Pico thought the observation sufficiently important to repeat it in the *Conclusiones . . de modo intelligendi hymnos Orphei*, no. 17 (*Opera*, p. 107): 'Ex eisdem dictis potest intelligi, cur in Symposio a Diotima Poros consilii filius, et Iesus in sacris literis angelus magni consilii nominetur'. It is perhaps indicative of the haphazard approach of the papal commission appointed to scrutinize the *Conclusiones*, that this particular thesis escaped them. It is not among the condemned articles. On the other hand it should be understood that Pico did not mean to equate Poros with Christ, nor can it have been the intention of the medallist. Since in the Neoplatonic system the higher cause 'contains' the lower, it would be fitting to address Christ as Poros, but unfitting to address Poros as Christ. Also, in admitting *Consilium* and *Poros* as 'divine names', in the sense of Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, Pico may have remembered Dionysius's rule that incongruous symbols are the best.

[2] See for example the Graeco-Egyptian monument inscribed DIVINAE INFINITAEQUE TRINITATI UNIUS ESSENTIAE, in *Hypnerotomachia*, fols. h iv^{v}–h v^{v}.

[3] Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals*, no. 998.

It would be natural to look for the source of the inscription in Pico's own writings, but although they abound in verbal triads, this particular sequence does not, as far as I know, occur in them.[1] It does, however, occur literally in Ficino's *De amore* II, 2, from which the inscription was clearly taken; and that will prove important for dating the medal. For, after having explained how 'the supreme maker first creates single things, then seizes them, and thirdly perfects them', Ficino traced the circle of divine love through the three phases of Pulchritudo, Amor, and Voluptas. The first of them issues from God as a kind of beacon, the second enters into the world which it moves to rapture, and the third returns to its maker in a state of joy:

'Circulus . . . prout in Deo incipit et allicit, *pulchritudo*: prout in mundum transiens ipsum rapit, *amor*; prout in auctorem remeans ipsi suum opus coniungit, *voluptas. Amor igitur in voluptatem a pulchritudine desinit.*'[2]

The last sentence—'Amor starts from Pulchritudo and ends in Voluptas'—corresponds to the group on the medal exactly. The converting power of Amor is illustrated by the Grace in the centre who, represented from the back, looks toward Voluptas on her right and stretches out her arm in her direction. Her left hand rests, as if for support, on the shoulder of Pulchritudo from whom she turns.

A curious effect, a slight change of focus, is produced by imposing on the classical group the action defined by the inscription: for the latter requires a dynamic shift of emphasis not quite in keeping with the static symmetry of the figures. However, since Amor and Voluptas turn their heads to the right while Pulchritudo faces to the left, it was possible to divide the group asymmetrically, $\overleftarrow{a} \mid \overrightarrow{b\ c}$, and thus to read into it the Neoplatonic triad of procession, conversion and return.

* * * * *

Historically, the asymmetrical reading of the group was not as much of an artifice as might be suspected: for it had an impressive mediaeval pedigree;[3] and while originally transmitted without benefit of monuments (cf. fig. 18), it proved so forceful that it

[1] Concerning his only explicit statement on the Graces (*Commento* II, xv; ed. Garin II, xvii), see below p. 68.

[2] Italics mine.

[3] Cf. Petrarch, *Africa* III, 216 ff. Mythographical illustrations in Warburg, *op. cit.*, figs. 112 f. The commentary of *Les échecs amoureux* (MS *cit.*, fols. 108r–110v, with illustration fol. 104v) stresses the asymmetrical grouping: '. . . troys iouvenelles nues, dont les deux regardoyent la tierce et aussi la déesse [Venus], et la tierce au contraire ne les regardoit pas, ains leur tournoit le dos. . . .' The two 'reverting' Graces are here represented as facing the goddess, while the averted Grace is the 'outgoing' one. This reading of the group, which recurs in illustrated MSS of the *Ovide moralisé* and seems to derive from Pierre Bersuire [Berchorius], *Reductorium morale* XV (cf. Warburg, *op. cit.*, p. 640), is not, as has been suggested, a mere corruption of the Servius tradition but good trinitarian logic, the rules of which were familiar to both the author and the illuminator of the commentary: 'car les subtils philosophes et saiges ne veulent pas si plainement parler aucunnesfois'. The three Graces in Gafurius (above, p. 47) belong to the same tradition: the figure on the left is the 'outgoing' Grace, the two on the right are 'returning'. Cf. also *Tarocchi*, our fig. 18.

outlived the archaeological discoveries of the Renaissance. The fastidious care with which Pico's medal reproduced the symmetry of the rediscovered group did not prevent the use of an inscription which was visually *retardataire*; and that curious disparity between verbal reading and visual fact, which ought to have strained the allegorical understanding, continued for several centuries undisturbed. In Ripa's *Iconologia*, for example, the Graces 'which may be seen sculptured in marble in several places in Rome',[1] are still described as an asymmetrical group;[2] and as late as 1716, an illustrated guide book to the Villa Borghese shows the group of the Graces, now in the Louvre, in a perspective distortion by which the two figures on the right, associated in the text with the 'twofold return' of gifts, stand out as a pair.[3] Even the neoclassic Graces on Appiani's monument in the Brera (1821) retain an asymmetrical design.[4] It can thus be shown that the mediaeval division of the figures was not unusual with artists and authors who were fully acquainted with the classical type: although not all of them had, like Pico, a Neoplatonic motive for focusing on the asymmetry.

Nevertheless, if we go back to the Stoic prescriptions for the giving, receiving, and returning of benefits, it may seem strange that the enraptured Grace, who receives the benefit, should now be the one who turns her back; but that is not without sense if we consider that the Platonic conversion or rapture consists in turning away from the world in which we are, so as to rejoin the spirit beckoning from the Beyond. In one of the *stucchi* in Raphael's *Logge*, the three Graces (fig. 40) look like an illustration of *De beneficiis* in the form recommended in Pierio Valeriano: one Grace is seen full-face, another straight from the back, and the third in profile; yet although they resemble Correggio's group (fig. 16), the triad they enact is Neoplatonic. The open, inviting gesture of the Grace on the left characterizes her as the 'offering' Grace, while the Grace turning her back is clearly the 'enraptured' or 'converted' one; and the Grace in profile is 'returning'. *Emanatio, raptio* and *remeatio* have rarely been illustrated in a clearer or more engaging sequence, although the Neoplatonic triad appears as Stoicism recast.[5]

[1] '... che se ne veggono anco scolpite in marmo in più luoghi di Roma' (s.v. 'Gratie').

[2] Ripa's description of the naked group as asymmetrical ('una hà la faccia volta in là da banda sinistra; l'altre due dalla destra guardano verso noi') has been followed to the letter by Leonhard Kern in a group of the Graces discovered by E. von Ybl, 'Leonhard Kerns bisher unbekanntes Meisterwerk im Museum der schönen Künste zu Budapest', *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen* XLVIII (1927), pp. 53–57. Unaware of its literary origins, the author ascribes the asymmetrical grouping to 'Einfluss des Frühbarockstils des 17. Jahrhunderts'.

[3] Andreas Brigentius, *Villa Burghesia* (1716), pp. 82 f. Illustration and argument derive from Domenico Montelatici, *Villa Borghese* (1700), pp. 298 ff.

[4] Andrea Appiani, the founder of the Brera, was a neo-classic painter known as *il pittore delle Grazie*. The monument is by Thorvaldsen.

[5] Executed by Giovanni da Udine, the Graces in the *Logge* were unmistakably designed by Raphael. The central figure, in particular, should be compared with Fischel, *Raphaels Zeichnungen* VI (1925), no. 269. It is interesting to observe, incidentally, that Correggio's stoical Graces (fig. 16) have not remained untouched by Neoplatonism. While liberal-

If now we return to the classical group on Pico's medal, we shall find that the ancient description of the Graces by Servius—*una aversa pingitur, duae nos respicientes*—has acquired a metaphysical meaning which seems to reverse the old moral. Instead of issuing from us to the world, the first benefit (*Pulchritudo*) descends from the Beyond to us, and it is only right, therefore, that the enraptured Grace (*Amor*) 'turns back' from us to the Beyond (*Voluptas*). At the same time, the impulse to read the group symmetrically was also reinforced by Neoplatonism, because the middle term in a dialectical triad, while separating the extremes, has also the function of keeping them together: $\overrightarrow{a}b\overleftarrow{c}$. As the Grace *Amor* is seen from the back, she may still be understood in the sense of Servius as the 'outgoing' Grace: Turning toward the Beyond, she is doubly rewarded by the other Graces, who grant *Pulchritudo* and *Voluptas* 'in return' for the offering of *Amor*.

The function assigned here to Amor, of mediator between Pulchritudo and Voluptas, corresponds exactly to the definition of Love first given by Plato in the *Symposium*, and then adopted by all the Platonists: 'Love is Desire aroused by Beauty.'[1] Desire alone, without Beauty as its source, would not be Love but animal passion; while Beauty alone, unrelated to passion, would be an abstract entity which does not arouse Love. Only by the vivifying rapture of Amor do the contraries of Pulchritudo and Voluptas become united: 'Contradictoria coincidunt in natura uniali.'[2] But to achieve the perfect union of contraries, Love must face the Beyond; for as long as Love remains attached to the finite world, Passion and Beauty will continue to clash. In the *Docta ignorantia* Cusanus explained that a circle and a straight line are incompatibles as long as they remain finite, but coincide when infinite.[3] In the same way do Beauty and Pleasure coincide if they are projected into the Beyond, that is, if they become transcendent Graces united by the rapture of Love.

Although Voluptas is the ultimate term of the triad and represents the goal at which Amor aims, the middle term is indispensable to unite the two extremes. 'The mean term', wrote Proclus, 'reaching out toward both the extremes, links the whole together with itself as mediator; it . . . implants in all a common character and mutual nexus—

ity *emanates* from the Grace in the centre and properly *remeates* with the returning Grace, the Grace on the left, who 'receives' the benefit, is in a state of *raptio*—a trait unmotivated by Seneca.

[1] Ficino, *De amore* I, iv: 'Cum amorem dicimus, pulchritudinis desiderium intelligite. Haec enim apud omnes philosophos amoris definitio est'. Pico, *Commento* II, viii (ed. Garin II, x): 'essendo amore appetito di bellezza'. Derived, of course, from Plato's *Symposium*: 'e così nel *Convivio* da Platone è diffinito amore: desiderio di bellezza', *ibid.* II, ii.

[2] Pico, *Conclusiones paradoxae numero LXXI*, no. 15.

[3] *De docta ignorantia* I, xiii: 'De passionibus lineae maximae et infinitae' (ed. Hoffmann-Klibansky, 1932, pp. 25 f.). See also Ficino's equation of *voluntas* and *voluptas*: 'Appetitus atque laetitia duo quidem in nobis sunt . . . circa finitum bonum, sed penes bonum infinitum voluntas omnis est ipsa voluptas' (*Opera*, p. 881).

for in this sense also givers and receivers constitute a single complete order, in that they converge upon the mean term as on a centre.'[1] With all its insistence on a supernatural orientation, this philosophy produced a theory of balance, in which Aristotle's prudence, his ethics of the 'golden mean', was reconciled with the Platonic enthusiasm of Proclus. Both authors had designated the vital 'mean' by the same Greek term, μεσότης.

In the *Shepheardes Calender*, Spenser expressed the union of balance and transcendence, which he knew from his study of Italian Neoplatonists, by juxtaposing two seemingly incompatible mottoes: *in medio virtus—in summo felicitas.*[2] For an explanation the Gloss referred to 'the saying of olde Philosophers, that vertue dwelleth in the middest . . . with continuance of the same Philosophers opinion, that albeit all bountye dwelleth in mediocritie, yet perfect felicitye dwelleth in supremacie.' Pico explained the connexion of 'mediocrity' with 'supremacy' by man's affinity and distance to God: 'There is this diversity between God and man, that God contains in him all things because he is their source, whereas man contains in him all things because he is their centre.' *Est autem haec diversitas inter Deum et hominem, quod Deus in se omnia continet uti omnium principium, homo autem in se omnia continet uti omnium medium.*[3] The aim of Ficino's doctrine of divine love was to teach man to feel his affinity with God, and thereby become aware of his own centre. With the shrewdness of an experienced physician, he conceived of transcendence as an integrating force, and a source of temporal well-being. Only by looking towards the Beyond as the true goal of ecstasy can man become balanced in the present. Balance depends upon ecstasy.

The pleasurable and gracious note of this dialectic distinguishes the original Florentine Platonism from the more sombre tones it acquired later, for example in Michelangelo. It is one of the amiable traits in Ficino's character that he began his literary career as an Epicurean. Although he claimed to have burned these youthful essays,[4] and even stoutly denied their authorship when he was teasingly reminded of them by Politian,[5] he always retained, even while posing as a Platonic high priest, an air of tolerant worldly benevolence which he could hardly claim to have acquired from Plato. A picture of the smiling Democritus, defying the tears of Heraclitus, continued to decorate his study, and reminded him and his visitors that εὐθυμία (spiritual well-

[1] *Elements of Theology*, ed. Dodds, p. 131, prop. 148. See also his commentary, p. 277.

[2] *Shepheardes Calender, Julye.*—For the study of Italian philosophy by Spenser and Harvey, cf. *Three proper and wittie familiar Letters*, etc., in which Harvey quotes at length from Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, whom he confuses, however, with Giovanni Pico (Oxford 1926, pp. 619 f.).

[3] *Heptaplus* V, vi (ed. Garin, p. 302).

[4] Letter to Martinus Uranius (*Opera*, p. 933). See also *Supplementum Ficinianum* I, ed. Kristeller (1937), p. cxlii; II, pp. 81–84.

[5] Letter to Politian (*Opera*, p. 618).

being) was a quality becoming a philosopher.[1] Among his early compilations was one with the title *De voluptate*,[2] which clearly foreshadowed his later attempts to redefine the nature of Pleasure with such care that it could become the highest good of a Platonist.[3] In an *Apologus de voluptate*, for example, he invented a fable by which to explain why Pleasure, originally residing on earth, was transferred to heaven where she is still to be found, while her place on earth is occupied by a deceptive double.[4] Distrust of the false *Voluptas*, however, should not deceive us into believing that knowledge is a higher good than pleasure. The fruition of knowledge is in pleasure, and therefore pleasure and joy, in a philosophical lover, are superior to inquiry and vision. This hedonistic conclusion, so unexpected by the common standards of Platonism,[5] was firmly asserted by Ficino in his *Epistola de felicitate*, an important little treatise addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici, who translated Ficino's lesson into the verses of *L'altercazione*. 'Amanti convenit', wrote Ficino, 'ut re amata fruatur et gaudeat, is enim est finis amoris; inquirenti autem ut videat. Gaudium igitur in homine felice superat visionem.'[6]

[1] *Opera*, pp. 636–8: 'neque stulti amplius erimus neque miseri, sed sapientes iam atque beati'. In *Theologia Platonica* XIII, ii, Democritus and Heraclitus are listed together with Plotinus (*Opera*, p. 286). On the praise of Democritus by Platonists of the Renaissance, in particular Cristoforo Landino, see Wind, 'The Christian Democritus', *Journal of the Warburg Institute* I (1937), pp. 180 f. Although the painting mentioned by Ficino has not survived, a considerable modern literature has grown around it (A. della Torre, *Storia dell'accademia platonica di Firenze*, 1902, pp. 639 f.; Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, p. 294), and no less than three conflicting attributions have been proposed for this *chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*. O. Brendel assigns it to Alberti (*Gnomon* XIII, 1937, p. 171), E. H. Gombrich to Botticelli (*Warburg Journal* VIII, p. 58), and Chastel to Pollaiuolo (*Marsile Ficin et l'art*, p. 70, note 16). Equally questionable are the claims that because it antedates Bramante's painting of the same subject in the Brera, Ficino's picture must have been an iconographical innovation. The parable of Democritus and Heraclitus was already used for clerical instruction in the fourteenth century (Ridewall, in *Fulgentius metaforalis* II, *ed. cit.*, pp. 76 f., exemplifying *vanitas mundi*), and there is no reason to assume that the image, which has its sources in Seneca, *De ira* II, x, 5 and *De tranquillitate animi* XV, 2, in Juvenal, *Saturae* X, 28ff., and in Lucian, *De sacrificiis* 15, was newly invented for or by Ficino, or that Democritus and Heraclitus were, apart from the bust of Plato, the only philosophers portrayed in the hall of the Florentine Academy. Equipped as a library ('nostra haec sive academia sive bibliotheca', Ficino, *Opera* I, p. 859), it probably had, as was customary in Renaissance libraries, a whole series of philosophers' portraits placed above the panelling. The term *gymnasium*, which Ficino uses in referring to the location of the painting, is a Ciceronian synonym for *academia*: 'Platonis . . . academia, quod est alterum gymnasium' (*Academicae quaestiones* I, iv); 'nobilissimum orbis terrarum gymnasium' (*Epistolae ad diversos* IV, xii). Cf. Diogenes Laertius III, 7.

[2] Completed in 1457. *Opera*, pp. 986–1012. The book begins with Plato and ends with Democritus.

[3] *Theologia Platonica* XIV, vii: 'Quod animus summam expetit opulentiam et volu[p]tatem'. *Opera*, pp. 315 ff. Also *In Plotinum* VI,vii, 30 (*Opera*, p. 1792). On religious affinities between Epicurus and Plato, see recently Festugière, *Épicure et ses dieux*, p. 95: '. . . cette religion d'Épicure s'apparente à celle de Platon'.

[4] *Opera*, p. 924. The argument resembles Porphyry, *Vita Pythagorae* 39: διττὴν εἶναι διαφορὰν ἡδονῶν.

[5] See below, p. 70.

[6] *Opera*, p. 663, *Quid est felicitas*: 'It behoves the lover to find fruition and joy in the beloved: for that is the goal of love; whereas vision behoves an enquirer. In a blessed man, vision is therefore vanquished by joy.' See also Ficino's definition of *decora voluptas* (*ibid.*, p. 1574) and *honesta voluptas* (p. 999). Platina's use of the title *Honesta voluptas* for a cookery book seems not to have diminished its prestige among Platonists, who also disregarded Cicero, *Academicae quaestiones* IV, xlv: 'Tu, cum honestas in voluptate contemnenda consistat, honestatem cum voluptate, tanquam hominem cum belua, copulabis?'

In the contest between cognition and enjoyment, which was so fully developed in *L'altercazione*, the palm was again given to enjoyment, which remained the *summum bonum*:

E come più nostra natura offende
dolersi che ignorar, pel suo contrario
il gaudio per più ben che 'l veder prende.

Non è giudicio buon dal nostro vario,
che questo gaudio sia l'ultimo bene, . . .

Così gaudio per sè disia il core,
e pel gaudio ogni cosa, ed a quel corre,
sì come a sommo bene, il nostro amore.[1]

To stress divine joy as the highest good Ficino concluded the tenth book of his *Epistolarium* with the *Apologi de voluptate*. In dedicating them to Martinus Uranius, he playfully used the name Uranius to characterize the final *voluptas* as celestial: 'Cum vero amor nihil desideret aliud quam voluptatem, merito decimus hic liber, consecratus amori, finem in voluptate facit. Voluptate, inquam, Urania, id est, coelesti, quandoquidem haec Uranio dedicatur.'[2]

This is the *Voluptas* on Pico's medal—the final joy at which *Amor* aims, while the initial vision is aroused by *Pulchritudo*. If Amor turns from Pulchritudo to Voluptas, it is because Love must turn from Vision to Joy. Joy as the highest good, and a gift superior to the intellect, was defended by Pico with his usual vigour: 'Intelligentiam enim voluptas consequitur, qua nulla maior, qua nulla verior, nulla est permanentior.'[3] Distinguishing in the *Commento* between *virtù cognoscente* and *virtù appetitiva*, he left no doubt that the first comes to fruition in the second: 'la quale quel che la cognoscente iudica essere buono, ama ed abbraccia . . . .'[4] His insistence on the appetitive act as an act of the will (*appetitio sive voluntas*), without which the cognitive act would be incomplete,[5] imparted to his theory of *voluptas* an energetic force which he occasionally veiled, in what he called his Parisian manner, by an excessive use of scholastic diction.[6]

[1] *Altercazione* V, 31–42: 'And as our nature is more offended by pain than by ignorance, conversely it holds joy to be a higher good than vision', etc.

[2] *Opera*, p. 921. Biographical facts on Martinus Uranius (alias Martin Prenninger) in Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition* (1939), pp. 43–5.

[3] *Heptaplus* V, i (ed. Garin, p. 292).

[4] *Commento* II, iii (corrected in ed. Garin II, v, p. 491).

[5] *De ente et uno* v (ed. Garin, p. 408): 'cognitio . . . imperfecta est, quia cognitio tantum est, et non est appetitio'.

[6] It is not quite easy, for example, to realize that the following two *Conclusiones* are identical with the argument put into verse in *L'altercazione*: 'Tenendo communem viam theologorum quod felicitas sit in intellectu vel in voluntate, dico duas conclusiones, quarum prima est haec: Quod intellectus ad felicitatem non perveniret nisi esset actus voluntatis, qui

Yet in one of the cryptic *Conclusiones . . . in doctrinam Platonis* (no. 6) he expressed his mystical hedonism in an unforgettable paradox:

'Love is said by Orpheus to be without eyes because he is above the intellect (*Ideo amor ab Orpheo sine oculis dicitur, quia est supra intellectum*).'[1]

The tradition that saw in the blind Cupid a symbol of unenlightened animal passion, inferior to the intellect, could not have been more forcefully challenged and reversed.

So important was this paradox in setting the tone of neo-Orphic thought and imagery in the Renaissance, and in causing debates between Ficino and Pico, that it is worth inquiring a little more closely into its sources and developments. With regard to the supremacy of blind love, we shall find at the outset a complete agreement between Ficino and Pico, and at the end a sharp divergence; which will bring us back to Pico's medal, and help us to establish its date.

in hoc est ipso actu intellectus potior. Secunda conclusio est haec: Licet actus intellectus formaliter felicitatis attingat objecti essentiam, tamen quod actus suus circa illum actus sit felicitatis, formaliter habet ab actu voluntatis' (*Conclusiones in theologia numero XXIX*, nos. 24 and 25).

[1] *Opera*, p. 96.

CHAPTER IV

ORPHEUS IN PRAISE OF BLIND LOVE

The traditional complaints against Blind Cupid are too well-known to require rehearsal, particularly since they have been reviewed and summarized in a masterly essay by Erwin Panofsky.[1] The author inferred from his survey, perhaps too readily, that any positive evaluation of Love would necessarily have to reject his blindness. 'As could be expected', he wrote, 'the Renaissance spokesmen of Neoplatonic theories refuted the belief that Love was blind as emphatically as the mediaeval champions of poetic Love, and used the figure of Blind Cupid, if at all, as a contrast to set off their own exalted conception.'[2] But the rule admits of some rather notable exceptions. That the supreme form of Neoplatonic love is blind was plainly asserted not only, as we have seen, by Marsilio Ficino, by Pico della Mirandola, by Lorenzo de' Medici, but the idea was expanded to inordinate lengths in the *Eroici furori* by Giordano Bruno, who distinguished no less than nine kinds of amorous blindness. The ninth and highest of these is the sacred blindness produced by the immediate presence of the deity: 'wherefore the most profound and divine theologians say that God is better honoured and loved by silence than by words, and better seen by closing the eyes to images than by opening them: and therefore the negative theology of Pythagoras and Dionysius is so celebrated and placed above the demonstrative theology of Aristotle and the Scholastics.'[3]

In one respect, Pico's conclusion that Love is blind 'because he is above the intellect' was indeed far from revolutionary. Among Renaissance theologians it was almost a commonplace to say that the highest mysteries transcend the understanding and must be apprehended through a state of darkness in which the distinctions of logic vanish. The 'negative theology' of Dionysius the Areopagite had developed the argument in ecstatic language; and by the dialectical skill of Nicolaus Cusanus 'the portentous

[1] 'Blind Cupid', *Studies in Iconology* (1939), pp. 95–128.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

[3] *Eroici furori* II, iv: 'la ragione de' nove ciechi, li quali apportano nove principi e cause particolari di sua cecità, ben che tutti convegnano in una causa generale d'un comun furore.'

power of the negative' had been refined to a 'learned ignorance'.[1] One did not need to turn to Pico's *Conclusiones* to learn of this particular principle. Any Platonist knew it as 'the One beyond Being', to which Plato had pointed in the *Parmenides*;[2] any Cabbalist knew it as 'the absconded God' (*Ensoph*).[3] And all agreed with the Areopagite that the ineffable power of the One could be described only by contradictory attributes, that is, by negating those traits which would render it finite and thereby accessible to the intellect. In another part of the *Conclusiones* Pico himself had already stated the principle in strictly philosophical terms: 'Contradictoria coincidunt in natura uniali.'[4] And in this form, so closely reminiscent of the Areopagite and of Cusanus,[5] the proposition did not yet contain any 'Orphic' secret. It was only by association with

[1] *De docta ignorantia* I, xxvi: 'De theologia negativa'.

[2] Klibansky, 'Plato's Parmenides in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance', *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* I (1943), pp. 281–330; *Plato latinus* III (1953): *Parmenides usque ad finem primae hypothesis . . . Procli commentarium in Parmenidem, pars ultima.*

[3] Blau, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 12, etc.

[4] *Conclusiones paradoxae numero LXXI*, no. 15.

[5] Pico's debt to Cusanus, which has been asserted and denied with equal vigour, poses an intricate historical problem. Despite Cusanus's great renown among his Italian contemporaries, shown by his inclusion in Vespasiano da Bisticci's *Vite*, his philosophical writings were difficult of access in Italy before the Milan edition of 1502, although interest in them was not lacking. Filelfo, for example, ordered a copy of the *Docta ignorantia* from Giovanni Andrea de Bussi (letter from Milan, 1460, quoted in Fiorentino, *Risorgimento filosofico*, pp. 119, 162 note 72); and Pomponius Laetus's teacher Pietro Odi da Montopoli, who referred to Cusanus as 'magistrum meum omnibus saeculis admirabilem' (Zabughin, *Giulio Pomponio Leto* I, pp. 15 f., 275 note 47), must surely have owned some of his works. Yet none of Cusanus's philosophical writings appear among the manuscripts of the Laurentian Library in Florence, the only Cusanus entries in Bandini's catalogue (I, 211, 213) being a few excerpts from his contributions to the Council of Basle (Plut. XVI, xi f.). Nor is Cusanus ever quoted in Ficino's books, although Ficino included his name in a list of Platonic authors compiled for a German correspondent, but without recalling any particular title: 'quaedam speculationes Nicolai Cusii cardinalis', a fair sign that he knew them only by hearsay (*Opera*, p. 899; Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition*, pp. 45 ff.). In the inventory of the manuscripts and books owned by Pico (P. Kibre, *The Library of Pico della Mirandola*, 1936, pp. 119 ff.) the name of Cusanus does not appear, which explains sufficiently why Pico does not quote him. And yet Pico knew the relevance of Cusanus's doctrines to his own philosophy so well that he planned, as he told the Inquisitors in Paris, 'to travel to Germany because of his great desire to see the library of the late cardinal of Cusa', *cupiebat proficisci in Germaniam maxime studio visendae bibliothecae olim cardinalis de Cusa* (L. Dorez and L. Thuasne, *Pic de la Mirandole en France*, 1897, p. 159), although he did not ultimately undertake the journey. In Ferrara, Calcagnini's reference to the cosmology of Cusanus, at the conclusion of *Quod caelum stet, terra moveatur* (*Opera*, p. 395), which was written after 1500, is typical both of the quasi-legendary nature of the oral transmission, and of its relatively great accuracy: 'I also hear (*audio*) that in the last century Cusa, a man of great doctrine and penetrating intelligence, outstanding as a cardinal, but far more outstanding as a man of letters, held this view [that the earth moves]. Of his commentaries I could only wish that they had come into my hands: for that man was of such acumen of genius that I believe he would have either spared me the present labour or supplied me with far weightier and better arguments for the proof of this proposition.' The passage supplies a welcome parallel to Pico's proposition *Contradictoria coincidunt in natura uniali*, which seems to echo Cusanus, but appears among the conclusions Pico regarded as new and entirely his own, *secundum opinionem propriam nova in philosophia dogmata inducentes*. Like Cusanus, but without knowing his demonstration in any detail, Pico had independently developed the proposition from his own study of Proclus and Dionysius the Areopagite. By the next generation, however, the arguments of Cusanus were directly known to Pico's disciples, as shown by the quotations in Francesco Giorgio, *De harmonia mundi totius* (1525), fol. 203^{v}, and Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *Opera* (1601), pp. 488, 509, 568, 622, 685, 706, 715, 726, 732, 774, 796; which should dispose of the error, still occasionally heard, that Giordano Bruno was the first Italian philosopher to quote Cusanus at length.

the image of Blind Love, as the power 'above the intellect', that Pico's argument acquired an unexpected 'Orphic' twist. Unexpected, because the blind Eros was known as a wanton god, a demon befuddling man's intelligence by arousing his animal appetites. The common *voluptas*, which gratified these desires, was known as blind pleasure unguided by the counsels of reason, and hence deceptive, corrupting, and short-lived. How could the god responsible for these delusions be transformed into a force superior to reason, a guide to delights that are secure?

The use of the same word *voluptas* to designate the most primitive and also the most exalted forms of pleasure was common among Epicureans, and it was recommended by Lorenzo Valla.[1] But in any Neoplatonic argument it would seem like a pointless equivocation since the pleasures assigned to heaven and earth would have to be kept strictly apart. But it is significant that they were not. Plotinus himself repeatedly advised his disciples to model their expectation of spiritual joy by what they knew of the delusive joys of the senses: 'And those to whom the Heaven-passion is unknown, may make guess at it by the passions of earth. Knowing what it is to win what most one loves, let them reflect that here our love is . . . a wooing of shadows that pass and change, because . . . our true beloved is elsewhere, who is ours to enjoy . . . by true possession. . . .'[2]

In the joys of mystical exaltation the principle of Pleasure, or man's appetitive impulse, is vindicated against the encroachments of Stoics, and of the more priggish among the Christian moralists. As Ficino never tired to repeat, the trouble about the pleasures of the senses is not that they are pleasures but that they do not last. It is their transitory, not their enjoyable nature which needs to be amended; and for that purpose the intellect is indispensable. But while the intellect raises us above pleasant delusions, it still detains us below the enjoyment of the real. In reducing the confusions of the senses to reason, the intellect clarifies but it also contracts: for it clarifies by setting limits; and to transcend these limits we require a new and more lasting confusion, which is supplied by the blindness of love. Intellect excludes contradictions, love embraces them. It was thus that Lorenzo de' Medici observed in *L'altercazione* how his nature contracted whenever he tried to comprehend God through the understanding, but expanded when he approached him through love.[3]

With Pico, the doctrine took on a darker hue; for it was, above all, the blindness in

[1] *De voluptate* III, ix.

[2] *Enneads* VI, ix, 9; tr. Dodds.

[3] *Altercazione* IV, 104 f. (= Ficino, *Opera*, p. 663). On the equivalence of 'will' and 'love' in Ficino, and their gradual elevation over the intellect, see Kristeller, 'Volontà e amor divino in Marsilio Ficino', *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* XIX (1938), pp. 185–214, resumed in *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, pp. 269–76.

ultimate love that attracted his imagination. 'Let us enter', Pico wrote, 'into the light of ignorance and, blinded by the darkness of the divine splendour, exclaim with the prophet: I fainted in thy halls, O Lord!'[1] That Pico expressed the supreme ecstasy by a quotation from David, Psalms lxxxiii, 3 (Vulgate), was a piece of virtuosity: for although he could point out that God was said by David to have 'placed his dwelling in darkness' (Psalms xvii, 12: *et posuit tenebras latibulum suum*), the more tangible and obvious biblical parallel was of course to be found in the Epistles of Paul. The mystery of joy above understanding, whether called Neoplatonic or Orphic in its pagan form, seemed to reveal the same experience of love as St Paul described in the Letter to the Ephesians (iii, 19). With so impressive a biblical concordance to sustain it, it is not surprising that the Orphic mystery of Blind Love was generously divulged by Renaissance humanists. In the famous handbook by Agrippa of Nettesheim, *De occulta philosophia*, Pico's conclusion was literally repeated with the marginal heading *Cur Amor caecus* (why Amor is blind): 'Ideoque amorem Orpheus sine oculis describit, quia est supra intellectum.'[2]

* * * * *

In defining the blindness of supreme love as Orphic, Pico relied on a Platonic text: he remembered an allusion to Orpheus in Proclus's *Commentary on the Timaeus* (33C). In explaining the creation of the world, Plato had written that an all-embracing body would not require eyes to see, nor ears to hear, since all things would be within it, and none outside. Proclus inferred from this statement that the highest mysteries must be seen without eyes and heard without ears, and he claimed that Orpheus meant to refer to that secret when he 'said Love to be eyeless' (καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνον ἀνόμματον Ἔρωτά φησιν ἔχειν Ὀρφεύς). And he also cited the relevant Orphic verse:

ποιμαίνων πραπίδεσσιν ἀνόμματον ὠκὺν ἔρωτα.

This line from a lost Orphic poem—'in his breast guarding eyeless, swift love'—is a fragment known only in Neoplatonic quotations,[3] but to Neoplatonists it must have been a very familiar text. Proclus alone cited it in three places, of which the second was again in the *Commentary on the Timaeus* (39E), while the third occurred in the *Commentary on Alcibiades I* (103A), of which Ficino made a Latin selection: *Excerpta Marsilii Ficini ex graecis Procli commentariis in Alcibiadem Platonis primum.*[4] In these

[1] *De ente et uno* v, ed. Garin, p. 414.
[2] *De occulta philosophia* (1533), III, xlix, p. 316.
[3] Kern, *Orphicorum fragmenta*, p. 155, fr. 82.
[4] *Opera*, pp. 1908–28. In a publication by Aldus of 1497, these extracts from Proclus were combined in one volume with Ficino's *De voluptate*, his translation of Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, and other texts referring to the pagan mysteries. A. A. Renouard, *Annales de l'imprimerie des Alde* (1834), no. 14.

excerpts by Ficino the decisive passage, on the blind Amor, completely agrees with Pico's *Conclusio*:

'. . . he [Amor] unites the intelligible intellect (*intelligibilem intellectum*) to the first and secret beauty by a certain life which is better than intelligence (*per vitam quandam intelligentia meliorem*). The theologian of the Greeks himself [Orpheus] therefore calls this Amor blind (*itaque Graecorum ipse Theologus caecum illum appellat amorem*). . . . And Plato also seems to me to have found that god in Orpheus, where he is called both Love and a great demon . . .'[1]

As if to perfect the demonstration, the word μυούμενοι ('initiated') in *Phaedrus* 250C was derived by Proclus and Hermias from μύειν ('to close the eyes'): '. . . for to close the eyes in initiation', Hermias explained in his commentary on the *Phaedrus*, 'is no longer to receive by sense those divine mysteries, but with the pure soul itself.'[2] And Proclus also wrote of 'giving ourselves up to the divine light, and closing the eyes of the soul, after this manner to become established in the unknown and occult unity of beings.'[3] There is a mocking echo of the mystic phraseology in Shakespeare:

> *Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;*
> *And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.*
>
> *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I, 1

In Greek, the same can be read in Olympiodorus:

ἀνόμματος γὰρ ὁ Ἔρως ὡς τῷ νῷ ὁρῶν καὶ ἀκούων.[4]

'And of this', wrote Pico, 'there is a good proof in the fact that many who were raptured to the vision of spiritual beauty, were by the same cause blinded (*accecati*) in their corporal eyes.'[5] In elaborating the theme he referred to the blindness of Tiresias, Homer, and St Paul. In Beroaldus's *Commentary on Apuleius*, the same lesson was reinforced by a quotation from *Symposium* 219A: 'For Plato writes in the Symposium that the

[1] *Opera*, pp. 1911 f. The superiority of blindness to sight is also stressed in Ficino's commentary on Dionysius the Areopagite (*Opera*, p. 1066): 'Lumen namque divinum, re qualibet cognoscenda superius, attingi non potest nisi per actum cognitione quavis excelsiorem, ideoque *oculos non habentem*' (italics mine). Love 'without eyes' (*sine oculis* or *oculos non habens*), and thus downright 'blind' (*caecus*) rather than 'blindfolded', does not lend itself easily to illustration, but does occur in *Les échecs amoureux*, MS *cit.*, fol. 104^{v}, where Amor, described in the text as *aveugle*, is pictured not with a bandage over his eyes, but with vacant, dead eyes, minutely rendered.

[2] Cf. Taylor, *Proclus on the Theology of Plato* I, p. 242 note 1. A copy of Hermias's *Commentary on the Phaedrus* is among Lorenzo de' Medici's manuscripts in the Laurenziana, Plut. 86, 4. Ficino's translation into Latin, mentioned in his correspondence (*Opera*, p. 899), is preserved in Cod. Vat. lat. 5953, fols. 134–316; cf. Kristeller, *Supplementum Ficinianum* I, p. cxlvi.

[3] *In Theologiam Platonis* I ,xxv ;ed. Portus ,p. 61 tr. Taylor, I, p. 79.

[4] Olympiodorus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, ed. L. G. Westerink (1956), p. 17, 103A.

[5] *Commento*, ed. Garin, p. 529.

eyes of the mind begin to see clearly when the eyes of the body begin to fail.'[1] When Psyche succumbs, in the story of Apuleius, to the desire to see Amor with her eyes, she learns that this causes the god to vanish; and it is only after she has atoned for her curiosity, and produced the vessel of beauty from the realm of death, that she is allowed to rejoin the transcendent Amor, by whom she conceives 'a daughter whom we call Voluptas', *quam Voluptatem nominamus* (Apuleius VI, 24).[2] Beroaldus's reading of Apuleius is sustained by an important passage in Plotinus about 'pictures and fables' of Amor and Psyche:

'That the Good is Yonder, appears by the love which is the soul's natural companion (ὁ ἔρως ὁ τῆς ψυχῆς ὁ σύμφυτος), so that both in pictures and in fables Eros and the Psyche make a pair. Because she is of God's race, yet other than God, she cannot but love God. Whilst she is Yonder she knows the Heaven-passion. . . . But when she enters into generation . . . , then she likes better another and a less enduring love. . . . Yet learning afterwards to hate the wanton dealings of this place, she journeys again to her father's house, when she has purified herself of earthly contacts, and abides in well-being (εὐπαθεῖ).'[3]

To expound the theory of divine Voluptas, there was no want of Neoplatonic witnesses. Besides 'Orpheus', Apuleius, Hermias, and Proclus, there was the *De mysteriis* of Iamblichus, translated by Ficino, in which 'the way to felicity' (*via ad felicitatem*) ends in a joyous union with the god: *tunc opifici totam copulat animam.*[4] There were the 'Celestial Hierarchies' of Dionysius the Areopagite, in which the seraphs, who are closest to the deity, burn with a love that is above knowledge.[5] There was Plutarch *On the* εἰ *at Delphi*, in which Pico discerned the same consum-

[1] Apuleius, *Opera . . . cum Philippi Beroaldi . . . commentariis* (Lyon 1587), p. 4. Conversely, *Phaedo* 81C–D describes how souls plagued 'with the fear of the invisible and the Beyond' (φόβῳ τοῦ ἀιδοῦς τε καὶ Ἅιδου, cf. *Cratylus* 403A–404A) become cloyed with sight and 'dragged down' into the visible (τὸ ὁρατόν). As Amor warns Psyche in Apuleius V, 11: 'quos [vultus], ut tibi saepe praedixi, non videbis, si videris'. Contrary to Reitzenstein, *Das Märchen von Amor und Psyche bei Apuleius* (1912), pp. 19, 25, 74 ff., these references to the Beyond in Apuleius, as recognized, among many others, by G. Heinrici, 'Zur Geschichte der Psyche, eine religionsgeschichtliche Skizze', *Preussische Jahrbücher* XC (1897), pp. 390–417, are quite sufficient to account for the sepulchral use of the myth; cf. recently Cumont, *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains* (1942), p. 319 note 8. On Amor as a god of death, see below, pp. 133 ff.

[2] Beroaldus's commentary on Apuleius VI, 24 (*ed. cit.*, p. 482) refers to *voluptas* as *qua summum bonum clarissimi philosophorum metiuntur.*

[3] *Enneads* VI, ix, 9, tr. Dodds. This iconographic passage in Plotinus, which seems to have escaped Cumont, is a formidable witness against the attempt made by Wilamowitz, *Glaube der Hellenen* II, p. 365, and supported by Nock, 'Sarcophagi and Symbolism', *American Journal of Archeology* L (1946), p. 148, to dissociate the theme of Eros and Psyche from the Platonic tradition and funerary symbolism.

[4] Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, ed. Ficino (Aldus 1497), fols. e viii^{v}–f i^{r}; Ficino, *Opera*, p. 1908.

[5] Pico, *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, pp. 110 ff. ('Dionysio interprete'). See also Ficino, *In Dionysium Areopagitam*: 'Bonum est super essentiam et intellectum', *Opera*, p. 1015; 'quomodo fruamur bono perfectius quam simpliciter intelligendo', p. 1016; 'quomodo fruamur Deo per modum quendam intellectu praestantiorem', p. 1019; p. 1025, etc.

mation of ecstasy which the Cabbalists called *binsica* (*mors osculi*),[1] etc. Yet none of these texts enjoyed quite the same veneration as a curiously painstaking description by Plotinus of mystical hilarity in *Enneads* VI, vii, 34–6. These soberly corybantic chapters, which left a profound impression not only on Ficino and Pico, but before them on Hermias, Proclus, and Dionysius,[2] have recently been acclaimed by M. Emile Bréhier as 'la description la plus complète qui soit chez Plotin de l'attitude mystique'.[3] It may suffice to quote from them one central passage, with Ficino's translation, or paraphrase, added in Latin:

'And it may be said therefore that the mind has two powers. . . . The one is the vision of the sober mind (*sanae mentis visio*), the other is the mind in a state of love (*ipsa mens amans*): for when it loses its reason by becoming drunk with nectar (*quando enim insanit nectare penitus ebria*), then it enters into a state of love, diffusing itself wholly into delight (*se ipsam in affectionem suavitatemque beatam saturitate diffundens*): and it is better for it thus to rage than to remain aloof from that drunkenness.'[4]

Ficino's feeling about the profusion of delight may be judged by his rendering the single noun εὐπάθεια by an over-abundant compound of three words: *affectio suavitasque beata.*

On the evidence of the *Republic* (363C–D) it would be difficult to claim (although Ficino attempted it in his commentary on the passage), that Plato looked with favour on the banquet of the blessed, 'where they have the saints lying on couches at a feast, everlastingly drunk', because 'their idea seems to be that an immortality of drunkenness is the highest meed of virtue.'[5] But in the *Phaedrus*, the classical text on divine madness, Plato himself happened to mention 'nectar' as one of the supernatural nourishments of the soul (247E); and that sufficed for Proclus and Hermias and their Renaissance followers to feel assured that Plotinus's 'drunkenness with nectar' was the same as the 'divine madness' in the *Phaedrus*, particularly as Plato, too, had there asserted that 'madness is superior to a sane mind, for the one is only of human, but the other of divine origin' (244D).

Plotinus compared the divine ecstasy to 'the passions of lovers' (*amantium passiones*)

[1] *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, p. 124; *Commento, ibid.*, p. 558.

[2] See H. Lewy, *Sobria ebrietas, Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik* (1929), pp. 103 f.; H. Koch, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen* (1900), pp. 141, 249 f.; H. F. Müller, *Dionysios. Proklos. Plotinos.* (1918), pp. 97 ff.

[3] Plotinus, ed. Bréhier (1954), notes to *Enneads* VI, vii, 34–6. Also Bréhier, *La Philosophie de Plotin* (1928), pp. 155–8: ecstasy as 'sentiment de présence'.

[4] *Enneads* VI, vii, 35.

[5] It is curious to observe Ficino twisting Plato's clearly derogatory passage into a positive argument on divine *voluptas*, *Opera*, p. 1399.

because 'they do not love as long as they remain preoccupied with a visible image (*circa figuram oculis manifestam*); but when their soul . . . becomes inwardly possessed by an invisible force, then they begin to love (*amor protinus oritur*).'[1] The lesson that vision is less perfect than delight, is here conveyed in terms which so clearly anticipate Ficino's *De felicitate*, Lorenzo's *L'altercazione*, and Pico's *Conclusiones*, that there can be no doubt they were all three inspired by this section of the *Enneads*, which Ficino thus summarized in his commentary on Plotinus: 'Since the good is far superior to the intellect, and its fruition is hence not correctly named intelligence, it appears that it should also not be called cognition: for it is more natural and more desirable than cognition.' *Cum bonum sit longe superius intellectu, et idcirco fruitio eius non recte dicatur intelligentia, videtur neque cognitio nominanda. Est enim naturalior et optabilior quam cognitio.*[2]

In Ficino's preface to the *Mystical Theology* of Dionysius the Areopagite, the name Dionysius offered the occasion for describing as Bacchic the approach to God through a negation of the intellect.[3] The prayer in which Ficino asked to be inspired by the Bacchic ecstasy, was almost literally borrowed from Plotinus: and yet it was addressed in the last line to the Christian trinity: *eadem prorsus oratione trinitas obsecranda.* 'The spirit of the god Dionysus', Ficino explained, 'was believed by the ancient theologians and Platonists to be the ecstasy and abandon of disencumbered minds, when partly by innate love, partly at the instigation of the god, they transgress the natural limits of intelligence and are miraculously transformed into the beloved god himself: where, inebriated by a certain new draft of nectar and by an immeasurable joy, they rage, as it were, in a bacchic frenzy (*ubi novo quodam nectaris haustu, et inexistimabili gaudio velut ebrie, ut ita dixerim, debacchantur*). In the drunkenness of this Dionysiac wine our Dionysius expresses his exultation. He pours forth enigmas, he sings in dithyrambs. . . . To penetrate the profundity of his meanings . . . to imitate his quasi-Orphic manner of speech (*quasi Orphicum dicendi characterem*) . . . , we too require the divine fury. And by the same prayer let us implore the Trinity that the light which God infused into Dionysius, in answer to his pious wish that he might penetrate the mysteries of the

[1] *Enneads* VI, vii, 33.

[2] Ficino, *Opera*, p. 1793, referring to *Enneads* VI, vii, 36. Cf. also Plotinus's own phrasing in *Enneads* VI, ix, 4, κατὰ παρουσίαν ἐπιστήμης κρείττονα and ἀποστῆναι δεῖ καὶ ἐπιστήμης καὶ ἐπιστητῶν. And again the metaphor of the *passio amatoria*, οἷον ἐρωτικὸν πάθημα. For the supreme blindness of love, cf. also *Enneads* VI, vii, 35, θεός, καὶ οὗτος οὐ κατ' ὄψιν φανείς, and for the identification of *beatitudo* with inherent *voluptas*, Ficino's commentary on *Enneads* VI, vii, 30: 'Actus eiusmodi beatitudo est; etiamsi nulla huic voluptas exterior adjungatur, neque tamen ipse est voluptatis expers. Ipsa enim expedita actionis integritas atque summitas est voluptas.'

[3] *Opera*, p. 1013. The same use in Pico, *Heptaplus* III, v (ed. Garin, p. 260): 'Vide quam haec Dionysiacis mysteriis apte conveniant', where 'Dionysiaca mysteria' means the mysteries of Dionysius the Areopagite.

prophets and the apostles, that the same may also be infused into us, who make a similar supplication. . . .'

* * * * *

In carrying his Orphic paradox to its logical conclusion, Pico developed a mystical radicalism which Ficino was not prepared to accept. Both agreed that the highest form of love is blind, but while for Ficino it was the blindness of joy (*gaudium*), Pico's enthusiasm entailed a doctrine of mystical self-annihilation. In order to ascend to 'the cloud in which God resides (*caligo quam Deus inhabitat*)',[1] Pico believed that man must surrender himself utterly to a state of unknowing, and approach the divine secret in the blindness of self-destruction. This supreme form of love, he argued, is distinguished from friendship in that it is not returned; for it would be absurd to assume that the love of a mortal for God were of the same kind as the love extended by God to a mortal. 'In friendship, reciprocity is always necessary, as Plato says in many places; that is, one friend must love the other in the same way and by the same power as he is loved by him. . . .'[2] But to extend reciprocity to God is impossible. 'Amor de quo in Symposio loquitur Plato, in Deo nullo modo esse potest.'[3] That Ficino did not distinguish between these two forms of affection was to Pico a sign of 'utter confusion' (*confundendo in tutto*). Not recognizing that divine love was the supreme expression of a discord, and should be inspired by a deep sense for the disproportion between mortal and god, Ficino had supposed that they were commensurable, and that divine love could be pictured as a supreme form of friendship, through which all human friendships were divinely secured. 'Thus there are not only two friends,' wrote Ficino, 'but necessarily always three, two of them men and one God.'[4]

For Ficino the world was 'full' of a god who transcends it: *Iovis omnia plena*. He therefore worshipped God simultaneously both beyond and within the creation. While Pico accepted Ficino's doctrine in principle,[5] he derived from it, in the *Heptaplus*, two divergent forms of felicity: 'natural felicity' (*naturalis felicitas*), which may be reached by uncovering the traces of God in oneself; and 'supreme felicity' (*summa felicitas*), which is achieved by losing oneself in God. It is important to observe that, as he grew more independent of Ficino, he inclined to play out these two forms against each other: 'The former', he warned in the *Heptaplus*, 'is . . . rather the shadow of felicity than felicity itself (*umbra potius felicitatis quam vera felicitas*) inasmuch as the creature in

[1] *De ente et uno* v (ed. Garin, p. 412).
[2] *Commento* II, ii (ed. Garin, p. 488).
[3] *Conclusiones secundum propriam opinionem . . . in doctrinam Platonis*, no. 22.
[4] 'Ideo non duo quidem soli, sed tres necessario amici sunt semper, duo videlicet homines, unusque Deus' (*Opera*, p. 634).
[5] *Heptaplus* VII, prooemium; ed. Garin, p. 328.

which God is traced . . . is but a tenuous shadow (*tenuis umbra*) of . . . divine goodness. Furthermore, things are restored by that pursuit to themselves rather than to God, it not being the aim that they should return to their origin but merely that they should not fall off from themselves (*ne a seipsis discedant*).'[1] On this point Pico made a distinction which threatened to undermine Ficino's system. Ficino always held the two ways to be one, because he believed that only by reverting to God do men achieve 'not falling off from themselves'. Since transcendence was the restorer of immanent virtue, man should find, not merely lose, himself in God.

But Pico suspected Ficino's optimism of a Narcissus-like self-love through God. Ficino had inadvertently recommended, under the title *Quomodo Deus amandus*, that for the sake of our self-perfection 'we should so appear to venerate things in God that we would embrace ourselves before others, and by loving God appear to have loved ourselves.'[2] But however poorly argued,[3] Ficino's idea of an amiable God who sustains friendships among men by entering into them and endowing them with an ideal perfection, is perhaps the more Grecian in spirit; and it also recalls the poetic *Sternenfreundschaft*[4] as well as St Augustine's idea of 'friendship in God';[5] whereas an Averroistic note may be detected in Pico's refusal to conceive of 'ultimate peace in God' and 'all-embracing friendship' (*unanimis amicitia*) as anything but human self-effacement: 'qua omnes animi in una mente, quae est super omnem mentem, *non concordent* adeo, sed ineffabili quodam modo unum penitus evadant'.[6] On this point, as on so many others, Pico's quarrel with Ficino was clearly related to his Paduan training and sympathies.[7]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 332. See also p. 338: 'Ad hanc felicitatem [i.e. summae felicitatis gradum] religio nos promovet . . . , quemadmodum ad naturalem duce utimur philosophia'.

[2] *De amore* VI, xix.

[3] In his Commentary on Dionysius the Areopagite, for example (*Opera*, p. 1070), Ficino defined self-love as a primary attribute of God, from which human self-love is a natural derivative. Our egotism thus becomes an imitation of God: 'Ex hoc primo amore [quo se ipsum Deus amat], ex quo accenduntur omnes, factum est, ut unumquodque quodammodo prius se ipsum quam caetera diligat.' See also *Theologia Platonica* XIV, viii: 'Quod colimus nos ipsos ac Deum' (*Opera*, pp. 317 f.). Pico, *Heptaplus* VI, *prooemium*, ed. Garin, p. 310 ('universae caritatis ordo'), may have been designed as an improvement of Ficino's argument.

[4] Ficino's *Epistolarium* shows that he made a cult of synastry, by which the harmony or 'identity' between two friends is ascribed to a star which they have in common. Cf. F. Boll, 'Synastria', *Socrates* V (1917), p. 458; F. Boll and C. Bezold, *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung* (1926), p. 113.

[5] *Confessiones* IV, ix, 14.

[6] *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, p. 118 (italics mine).

[7] On Pico's Averroism, see Garin, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola* (1937), pp. 12 ff., 22, 26 f., 205 ff.; Anagnine, *op. cit.*, pp. 8–13; Cassirer in *Journal of the History of Ideas* III (1942), pp. 134 ff., 335. While Pico's definition of *summa felicitas* as the ultimate extinction of the self in God would be difficult to reconcile with the Christian eschatology, his attempt to reduce the self-perfection of man on earth to a mere shadow felicity resembles Savonarola's preachings. Whether he ever succumbed to Savonarola to the same degree as his nephew Gianfrancesco, has been doubted by Dorez (*Pic de la Mirandole en France*, pp. 9, 17, 194), whereas Festugière ('Studia Mirandulana', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* VII, 1932, pp. 144 ff.) supports the traditional view. The problem is complicated by the fact that Gianfrancesco is a biased witness on this question. From Pico, *De ente et uno* v (ed. Garin, p. 414), 'Defeci in atriis tuis, Domine', it would appear that he never abandoned his view of *summa felicitas* as personal 'extinction in God', and that alone would

As the acumen and youthful intransigence of Pico detected many more flaws in Ficino's system, the celebrated harmony between master and pupil was of a remarkably short duration. The tension ended in an open breach when the *mirandus iuvenis* publicly offended his master by the hostile tone and content of *De ente et uno*. 'Oh that the admirable youth', complained Ficino, 'had carefully considered these propositions and arguments before venturing forth with such confidence against his teacher, and declaring himself so firmly against the opinion of all the Platonists.'[1] The first unmistakable signs of the estrangement occur in the original version of the *Commento*, which was composed in 1486, that is, three years after Pico's arrival in Florence. Here Pico interspersed his own observations on the Platonic theology with such remarks as 'not as Marsilio thinks', 'greatly do I wonder (*mi maraviglio*) how Marsilio can hold', 'a matter on which Marsilio should have greatly guarded himself from erring because on it depends the entire subject, and he that errs on this one point necessarily deviates in all the other parts not a little from the truth', winding up with an unqualified condemnation of Ficino's *De amore*:

'Puoi dunque considerare, lettore, quanti errori . . . commetta el nostro Marsilio confundendo in tutto, . . . e pervertendo ciò che d'amore parla. . . . In ogni parte di questo trattato abbia commesso in ogni materia errori, come io credo nel processo chiaramente manifestare.'[2]

As these remarks are directed against the very book from which the inscription on Pico's medal was taken, it is reasonable to infer that the medal must have been made before the autumn of 1486, which appears to be the date when the *Commento* was composed.[3] The medal would belong therefore to the first years of Pico's settlement in Florence (which began in the winter of 1483), when he still considered the *De amore*, as did all the loyal disciples of Ficino, the bible of the Platonic revival. Allowing for a certain period on either side, which was needed for acquiring Ficino's view and for relinquishing it, the date of the medal can be reasonably fixed as 1484–5.

exclude a strict adherence to Savonarola's theology. See also his Orphic-Cabbalistic conclusion no. 15: 'Idem est nox apud Orpheum, et Ensoph in Cabala', which means, 'Night and God are one.' He introduced, however, a number of concessions and safeguards in the *Conclusiones in Averroem* no. 4, *in Porphyrium* no. 12, *in doctrinam Platonis* no. 36, and *Conclusiones paradoxae* no. 69: 'quod tamen non assertive sed probabiliter dictum est'. His strictly philosophical opinion is unmistakably stated in *Commento* I, iii (ed. Garin, pp. 464 f.), concerning the plurality or uniqueness of the angelic mind. He subscribed to the latter opinion as being 'più filosofica e più conforme ad Aristotele e Platone e da tutti e' Peripatetici e migliori Platonici seguitata'.

[1] *In Parmenidem* xlix (*Opera*, p. 1164).

[2] *Commento*, ed. Garin, pp. 559, 466, 499, 488. These passages were omitted from the edition of Buonaccorsi (1519), on which all subsequent editions, except Garin's, are based. Cf. Garin, pp. 16 f.

[3] For the date, see *ibid.*, p. 11, with letters addressed by Pico to Andrea Corneo, 15 October 1486, when the treatise neared completion (*paulo mox*), and to Domenico Benivieni, 10 November 1486, when it was finished (*egimus*).

These observations also help to solve another problem which might disturb a careful reader of Pico. In Pico's *Commento* the argument about the Graces does not correspond to the Graces on Pico's medal. Instead of *Pulchritudo-Amor-Voluptas* they represent *Pulchritudo-Intellectus-Voluntas*.[1] The triad again forms, as is clear from Pico's text, a Neoplatonic cycle of procession, conversion, and return. *Pulchritudo* emanates from the Beyond while *Intellectus* and *Voluntas* revert to it. Pico therefore pictured the last two Graces as turning away ('col volto in là'), as if 'returning from us to the gods', and the first Grace as facing us ('col volto inverso noi'), 'proceeding and not returning'. In other words, he retained the asymmetrical division of the classical group, $\overleftarrow{a} \mid \overrightarrow{b\ c}$, which was also prescribed by the legend on his medal, the orientation of the Graces being defined by the posture of their heads rather than their bodies.[2] It would be an error therefore to claim, as has occasionally been done, that in this passage Pico imagined the classical group turned around. He read it exactly as it would have to be read on his own medal to produce the sequence Pulchritudo-Amor-Voluptas, except that he replaced Amor and Voluptas by *Intellectus* and *Voluntas*. As a result, he produced a more sober, restricted triad, depriving the third Grace (*Voluntas*) of the fulfilment of joy (*Voluptas*), and reducing the second Grace to an *amor intellectualis*, that is, a desire of understanding. The difference was one of degree, Ficino himself having explained that *Voluntas* becomes *Voluptas* when it expands from the finite to the infinite: 'penes bonum infinitum voluntas omnis est ipsa voluptas.'[3]

With the deliberate reduction of *Voluptas* to *Voluntas*, and of *Amor* to *Intellectus*, Pico withdrew the triad of the Graces from that ultimate ecstasy in which, as he claimed against Ficino, the triad would altogether vanish into the One. Ficino sustained the gentler view that union with the ultimate need not always entail extinction. 'It is possible', he wrote in his commentary on Plotinus, 'to achieve this not only after the present life but also while we are living (*etiam in hac vita*).'[4] And Plotinus himself seemed to supply the proof. He had experienced these extreme states occasionally,[5] and without detriment to his sober vision, and he did not hesitate to speak of them as reflected or copied in more familiar states of love: μίμησις δὲ τούτου καὶ οἱ ἐνταῦθα ἐρασταὶ καὶ ἐρώμενοι συγκρῖναι θέλοντες. In Ficino's rendering: 'Id enim apud

[1] *Commento* II, xv (ed. Garin II, xvii, p. 509): 'Bellezza-Intelletto-Voluntà'.

[2] See above, p. 50. The names of the Graces listed by Pico as *Viridità*, *Splendore* and *Letizia* were again made to fit the argument. *Viridità* represents the permanent, imperishable freshness of Beauty ('lo essere verde non è altro che permanere e durare') which shines forth from the Beyond, whereas the two powers of the soul which revert to the Beyond are represented by *Splendore* (='illumination of the intellect') and *Letizia* (='motivation of the will').

[3] *Opera*, p. 881. See also p. 108, on the relation of *voluntas* (=*inclinatio mentis ad bonum*) to *voluptas* (=*quies voluntatis in bono*).

[4] *Opera*, p. 1793 (referring to *Enneads* VI, vii, 34).

[5] Four times, according to Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 23.

nos imitari solent amantes et amati mutuo redamantes, qui conflari nituntur in unum.'[1]

The frequent allusions to the passions of lovers, by which Plotinus paraphrased the mystical ecstasy, encouraged Ficino in his belief that *voluptas* should be reclassified as a noble passion. Here again his Neoplatonism is marked by a curiously anti-ascetic strain: for however insistent he was in explaining the agreement of his philosophy with the Christian creed, he tried to infuse into Christian morals a kind of neo-pagan joy, for which the *passio amatoria* served as a model. It is in the positive revaluation of an impulse which Christian asceticism tended to scorn, that Ficino revealed himself as a neo-pagan thinker. So much has been written in recent years on the continuation of the Middle Ages into the Renaissance, and of mediaeval modes of thought in Renaissance Platonism, that we are apt to underestimate the decisive 'transvaluation of values' which Ficino and some of his Florentine friends effected in the theory of morals. A noble form of irascibility, for instance, remained a contradiction in terms as long as *ira* was classed irrevocably as a deadly sin.[2] Yet under the influence of Seneca's *De ira*, although the mediaeval classification continued, a 'noble rage' was separated off from the common vice and defended as a virtue by Florentine humanists, in particular by Bruni, Palmieri, Politian, and Landino.[3] By a similar transmutation the vice of sloth, the horrid *acedia*, was distilled into noble melancholy: for although *acedia* remained a deadly sin, an Aristotelian refinement of the affliction became the privilege of inspired men.[4] It is with these Renaissance vindications of melancholy and rage as noble

[1] *Enneads* VI, vii, 34.

[2] In order to explain Psalms iv, 5 [Vulgate]: 'irascimini et nolite peccare', St Gregory (*Moralia* V, xlv, 82 f.; *Patr. Lat.* LXXV, 726 f.) and St Bernard (*Sermones, Patr. Lat.* CLXXXIII, 487) found themselves forced to postulate a deliberate anger which 'does not burst forth', but comes when called —in other words, an anger which is no anger. And even to that St Gregory added a *cavendum*: 'Cavendum ne ira menti ex zelo commotae dominetur.'

[3] A characteristic example is Politian's *De ira* (*Opera* II, fols. 54^{v} f.), a short note on the education of children. He distinguishes within *ira* between a vicious *rancor* (μῆνις, κότος), the sign of an illiberal spirit, and a generous *excandescentia* (θυμός), which should be encouraged because it is the opposite of stupor. Yet he regards *iracundia* as their common source and describes them as *duo diversi inter se affectus ab uno quasi capite et fonte emanantes*. On the revaluation of anger by political thinkers, cf. H. Baron, 'La rinascità dell' etica statale romana nell'umanesimo fiorentino del Quattrocento', *Civiltà moderna* VII (1935), p. 38; D. Cantimori, 'Rhetoric and Politics in Italian Humanism', *Journal of the Warburg Institute* I (1937), p. 92. A theological justification was attempted by Pico, *Heptaplus* IV, v (ed. Garin, p. 282), in connexion with God's blessing of the animals: 'Be fruitful, and multiply.' He argued that anger, pride, concupiscence and other animal passions, far from being inherently evil, become evil only through abuse, being intrinsically divine endowments adjusted to man's particular state. 'We should feel anger, but within measure; and revenge is often a work of justice, and each must protect his own dignity, nor are honours to be spurned which are obtained by honest means.' This passage, in one of Pico's latest theological writings, is so contrary to Savonarola's praise of self-mortification that it seems to justify Dorez's doubt concerning the extent of Pico's conversion by Savonarola. See above, p. 66 note 7.

[4] Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer* I (1943), pp. 156–71; Panofsky-Saxl, *Dürers Kupferstich 'Melencolia I'* (1923). Of earlier literature see the basic work of K. Giehlow, 'Dürers Stich "Melencolia I" und der maximilianische Humanistenkreis', in Supplement to *Die graphischen Künste* XXVI (1903), pp. 29–41; XXVII (1904), pp. 6–18, 57–78.

passions that the cult of a noble *voluptas* should be compared.[1] Like *acedia* and *ira*, the vice of *luxuria* continued to be classed as a deadly sin, and the vulgar *voluptas*, that is, incontinence, was pictured in her image. And yet, on the authority of Plotinus, sustained in this instance by Epicurus, a noble *voluptas* was introduced as the *summum bonum* of Neoplatonists.[2]

Some sixty years ago the hedonistic element in Ficino was clearly observed by F. Gabotto in an article 'L'epicureismo di Marsilio Ficino',[3] a sequel to his studies in Renaissance Epicureanism;[4] but not only did his analysis fail at the time to impress, disturb, or reform the conventional view of the Platonic revival—even today, after D. C. Allen has newly demonstrated 'The Rehabilitation of Epicurus and his Theory of Pleasure in the Early Renaissance',[5] the Epicurean element in Renaissance Platonism seems to cause consternation, embarrassment, and disbelief.[6] The author of a recent article on 'The Defence of Pleasure in More's Utopia', is so perplexed by More's definition of pleasure as the supreme good that he tries to reduce the argument to a rhetorical showpiece, a provocative *declamatio* designed to challenge rather than persuade.[7] Yet any one reading Book II of the *Utopia* without prejudice will discover that More not only means exactly what he says, but that he says exactly the same as Ficino and Pico: 'Therefore the matter diligently weighed and considered, thus they [the Utopians] think that all our actions, and in them the virtues themselves, be referred at the last to pleasure, as their end and felicity.' In his famous colloquy *The Epicurean* Erasmus remarked that 'if they are Epicureans that live pleasantly, none are more truly Epicureans than those that live holily and religiously',[8] implying that Christianity should be a guide to the most pleasant life both in this world and in the next. The Reverend E. Johnson, who edited Bailey's translation of the *Colloquies* with notes, remarked very justly that Erasmus's observations on Pleasure anticipate Montaigne's:

[1] See recently Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano* (1952), pp. 64–8: 'Il mondo delle passioni e il valore del piacere'.

[2] Ficino conceded (*In Philebum* I, xxxvii, *Opera*, p. 1252) that the definition of *voluptas* as the highest good would be difficult to reconcile with a literal reading of Plato, but he found support for it in *Phaedrus* 247E by an allegorical reading of the passage on ambrosia and nectar. Cf. *Epistola de felicitate*, *Opera*, p. 663; *De voluptate*, *ibid.*, p. 987. His occasional attempt to escape the dilemma by postulating a coincidence of pleasure and intellect in God (*Theologia Platonica* X, viii, *Opera*, p. 237; also *Epistolarium* II, *ibid.*, p. 693) did little to resolve the duality, conflict, and subordination between *intellectus* and *voluptas* in man. On the whole he retained the position of Plotinus (*Enneads* VI, vii, 25–30 ff.) who starts from the problem posed by the 'mixture' of *intellectus* and *voluptas* in the *Philebus* (τάχα ἂν αἰσθόμενος ταύτης τῆς ἀπορίας, in Ficino's translation: *fortasse ambiguitatem eiusmodi sentiens*), and then resolves it by the theory of supreme, unmixed *voluptas*, which transcends the intellect altogether.

[3] *Rivista di filosofia scientifica* X (1891), pp. 428–442.

[4] *Ibid.* VIII (1889), pp. 552–63; 651–72; 730–9.

[5] *Studies in Philology* XLI (1944), pp. 1–5.

[6] A marked exception is of course Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, pp. 296 f.

[7] E. L. Surtz, in *Studies in Philology* XLVI (1949), pp. 99–112. In another article, 'Epicurus in Utopia', *ELH* XVI (1949), pp. 89–103, the same author extends his paradoxical interpretation also to Erasmus's colloquy *The Epicurean*.

[8] *The Colloquies of Desiderius Erasmus*, tr. N. Bailey, III (1900), p. 260.

'Whatever they may say, in virtue itself the ultimate aim of our effort is enjoyment [*volupté*]. It pleases me to knock this word, which is so distasteful to them, about their ears; and if it signifies some supreme joy and exceeding contentment, it is more due to the assistance of virtue than to any other assistance.'[1]

The Stoic assumption that pleasure must be deficient in virtue, and virtue deficient in pleasure, never gained much credence among Renaissance Neoplatonists. Granted that the pursuit of virtue may at times be unpleasant, and the pursuit of pleasure at times lead to vice, it would be in either case, Ficino argued, only a limited virtue and a limited pleasure which would be attended by such negative effects. The more comprehensive the virtues and the pleasures become, the more largely they are bound to overlap; and when a pleasure or virtue becomes all-embracing—that is, when they reach a perfection achieved only in states of ecstasy—then goodness becomes indistinguishable from bliss. In illustrating the motto: *cum virtute alma consentit vera voluptas*, Bocchi pictured Minerva and Venus embracing each other while they crown the drunken Silenus (fig. 51).[2]

* * * * *

If the literature on the Graces has helped to define the nature of the breach between Ficino and Pico, it also informs us about the harmony which prevailed between them at first. In a letter entitled *De tribus gratiis et concordia*, which seems to antedate their quarrel,[3] Ficino made a good-humoured attempt to define the philosophical eminence

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 314; Montaigne, *Essais* I, xix.

[2] Achille Bocchi, *Symbolicae quaestiones* (1574), no. x. Although the first edition appeared as late as 1555, the *Symbolicae quaestiones* consciously preserves some of the symbolism of the middle and late Quattrocento, as seen clearly in Symbolon no. cxlvii (ed. 1574), which copies verbatim, for the benefit of Bocchi's son, a table of hieroglyphs from the *Hypnerotomachia*, 1499, fol. c^{r}. It is not surprising therefore to find Bocchi useful in resolving problems of the Quattrocento. Bocchi, like Valeriano and Gyraldus who were his friends, was imbued with the spirit of fifteenth-century hieroglyphics; and although most of their books appeared late in print, they are distinguished from Ripa's and Cartari's iconologies by being originally conceived for a recondite circle, and not as manuals for popular use. In fact, some of the incongruities in Valeriano and Gyraldus result from the insertion of early writings into encyclopaedic compendia whose style they do not fit. In Gyraldus's *Syntagmata*, the chapters on Bacchus and the Muses show these vestiges very clearly; but the most interesting case is Book XXXIII of Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica*, which incorporates the remnants of an independent Dialogue, with Fra Urbano as chief speaker. It is possible that this piece preserves the form in which Valeriano had originally hoped to cast the *Hieroglyphica*, before he was engulfed by lexicography. Although cruelly disjointed by its adaptation to the sectional headings of the book, the Dialogue is not an unworthy pendant to Valeriano's *De infelicitate literatorum*, of a later date, which ends with a eulogy of Fra Urbano. (Fra Urbano, Valeriano's uncle and teacher, and a leading member of the Aldine Academy, lived from 1440 to 1524.)

[3] Addressed to Salviati and Benivieni, *Opera*, p. 890. The letter bears no date, and was included by Ficino in a group of letters of 1488, but to judge by its content, it must antedate Pico's conflict with the Church, which began in 1487. Ficino's description of Pico as a genius of peace, introducing harmony and concord wherever he went, could hardly have been written during the period in which Pico was indicted for heresy, pursued and arrested because of his obstinacy, and returned to Florence as a virtual prisoner, in the friendly custody of Lorenzo. The indictment was not revoked until 1493, one year before Pico's death.

of his pupil by applying to him his own favourite image. The occasion for this was offered by Pico's title, Count of Concordia. It was part of Ficino's epistolary style to embellish the names of his friends with puns—puns of an oracular or diagnostic jocularity, as if the nature of the man could be extracted from his name (quite possibly a mannerism adopted from Plato). If Mirandola gave rise to *mirandus iuvenis*, Concordia did not fail to recall the concord of the Graces. Now the Latin word for count being *comes*, which means follower, the *comes Concordiae* was to all appearances a 'follower of the Graces'. But Ficino knew that he was more than that. By his sense of concord Pico was able to reconcile the most divergent philosophers: Platonists and Aristotelians, Christians and Jews, Latins and Greeks, all dropped their quarrels in his presence to reveal an unexpected harmony. Clearly, this supposed follower of the Graces was their leader; for they followed him wherever he went. And as the Latin word for leader is *dux*, which also means duke, Ficino promoted Pico *honoris causa* from a count to a duke of Concordia.

All of that was a joke, and rather laboured. But in Florence literary jokes had a serious aspect. They were a way of attaching a label. Since the Graces appear on Pico's medal with an inscription taken from Ficino, it is very likely, in view of Ficino's letter, that it was he who fastened the emblem on Pico. And there is further evidence that, in this period of his life, Pico not only accepted the emblem with grace, but made of it the playful use prescribed by the rites of Florentine Platonism.

Like troubadours, the Platonic lovers were expected to choose an ideal lady, to whom they could address amorous courtesies in emblematic language. The lady would return the honour by accepting the emblem of her Platonic suitor, and adapting it to her own use. Given the custom,[1] it can hardly be an accident that the medal of Giovanna degli Albizzi, the wife of the gifted Lorenzo Tornabuoni to whom Politian refers in a letter to Pico as 'non discipulus modo sed et alumnus',[2] shows the image of the three Graces in a design (figs. 12, 13) which is cast from the same model as Pico's medal[3] and bears an inscription that answers his. Instead of PULCHRITUDO-AMOR-VOLUPTAS, it reads CASTITAS-PULCHRITUDO-AMOR. The shift of emphasis introduces a cooler tone which reflects the mood of the admired woman. Amor, originally in the centre, is now on the right; Pulchritudo, which was on the left, has moved to the centre; Castitas, not previously recorded, has entered on the left, and Voluptas has

[1] Cf. Warburg, 'Delle imprese amorose', *op. cit.*, pp. 79–88; also pp. 331–9.

[2] *Epistolae* XII, vii, in *Opera, ed. cit.* I, fol. 100^{v}. He also dedicated the *Ambra* to him, *Epistolae* X, xi, *ibid.*, fol. 90^{r}.

[3] Hill, no. 1021, cf. no. 998: 'from same model'. The date of the obverse, which represents Giovanna as married (1486), need not be the date of the first use of the reverse. She may well have used the image of the three Graces both before and after her marriage.

vanished altogether. In the place of a Platonic definition of Love: 'Love is Passion aroused by Beauty', a motto suitable for a man, we now have a Platonic definition of Beauty: 'Beauty is Love combined with Chastity', which is the answer of a woman. Again the Grace in the centre unites the opposites: for in Pulchritudo the contraries of Castitas and Amor coincide. But like the Grace of Amor on Pico's medal, Pulchritudo now also achieves a conversion. As Love there turned from Beauty toward Pleasure, so Beauty now turns from Chastity toward Love.

In these elaborate games of disinterested courtship, which culminated in tournaments and masques, the dialectical language of Neoplatonism acquired a playful, chivalrous accent. But although the terms of the 'mysteries of Plato' were eminently well-suited to sustain the formal pleasures of hide-and-seek, the worldly use made of the mysteries did not detract from the reverence in which they were held, but merely proved their vitality. Just as it was customary in the exchange of sonnets to reverse the argument while retaining the rhymes, so the exchange of emblems made it obligatory to retain the image but reverse its meaning.[1] On both sides of the argument it was considered elegant to introduce ideas that were sanctioned by a fixed tradition. Hence the names chosen for the Graces by Giovanna degli Albizzi were, no less than those on Pico's medal, adopted rather than invented for the purpose. In the engraving of the *Tarocchi*, for example, which antedates these medals by about twenty years, the three Graces, still unaware of their obligation to assume a classical posture (fig. 18), are characterized by three attributes—a loin cloth, a flower, and a flame—which signify Castitas, Pulchritudo, and Amor.[2]

Giovanna degli Albizzi was not satisfied, however, with only one emblem for the reverse of her medal. As an alternative to the three Graces she employed a surprisingly martial and vigorous design (fig. 14). This shows a huntress carrying bow and arrow, wearing a winged crown on her head and heavy boots on her feet, and standing on a cloud which covers the rays of the sun. The inscription is a verse from the *Aeneid* in which Venus appears disguised as a nymph of Diana, the goddess of love as a devotee of chastity:

Virginis os habitumque gerens et virginis arma.[3]

As in a musical modulation, the theme of the three Graces, CASTITAS-PULCHRITUDO-AMOR, has been restated in a different key. The union of Chastity and Love

[1] The custom was parodied by Pietro Aretino. His emblem VERITAS ODIUM PARIT, best shown in the medal ascribed to Leone Leoni, reverses the design of Federigo Gonzaga's medal, GLORIAM AFFERTE DOMINO (Hill, nos. 267 f., ascribed to Giambattista Cavalli). The medal signed A.V. (Alessandro Vittoria?), with the notorious inscription PRINCIPI TRIBUTATI DAI POPOLI IL SERVO LORO TRIBUTANO, parodies a famous medal of Paul III by Alessandro Cesati: OMNES REGES SERVIENT EI.

[2] Detail from A. M. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving* IV (1938), pl. 362: 'Venus'.

[3] I, 315.

through the mediation of Beauty is now expressed by one hybrid figure in which the two opposing goddesses, Diana and Venus, are merged into one.[1]

An exact parallel to the two emblems of Giovanna is to be found in the medals of Maria Poliziana, who is believed to have been the sister of Politian. She, too, used two alternative designs, one of them martial, the other amiable.[2] In the amiable version the three Graces reappear, with the inscription CONCORDIA, while the martial design shows a single energetic figure of CONSTANTIA (figs. 49, 50). Normally, Constantia would hold a lance and lean on a column (fig. 52),[3] and the present figure repeats that well-known posture. But the lance is replaced by an arrow of love which she swings in a defiant bellicose manner, and the column on which she leans is formed by a bundle of arrows, the traditional symbol of Concordia. The visibly fierce, unassailable Constantia is therefore a concealed Concordia; like a closed fist withholding an open palm. Or, to borrow the terminology of Cusanus, Constantia is represented as an 'infolded' Concordia—Concordia as an 'unfolded' Constantia[4] (a terminology which fits also the Albizzi medal: Venus-Virgo unfolded in the Graces, the Graces infolded in Venus-Virgo).

Unquestionably, the most authoritative of these composite figures was the Venus-Virgo from the *Aeneid*. In her the Renaissance Platonists thought they had found a fine poetical confirmation for their doctrine of the union of Chastity and Love. While it is doubtful whether Virgil intended the image to convey any mystery of that kind, they expanded it into a semi-chaste, semi-voluptuous cult of Venus, in which her double nature could be refined to the highest points of either reverence or frivolity or both.[5] A popular ornament on Florentine marriage *cassoni*,[6] the emblem acquired a

[1] Being a single figure, this image may have been designed for Giovanna as a companion piece to the single figure of Mercury on her husband's medal (Hill, no. 1068), although Mercury would of course also be in place as leader of the Graces (cf. Warburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 39, 320). Hill's attempt to date Lorenzo Tornabuoni's medal by the sword of Mercury, in which he sees an allusion to Lorenzo's execution, is untenable because a 'sword-bearing Mercury' is a mediaeval and Renaissance commonplace, deriving from his byname *Argeiphontes*: 'onde posero alle volte ancora une scimitarra in mano alla sua statoa' (Cartari, *Imagini*, s.v. 'Mercurio'); 'falcatum gladium habens, id est Harpen' (Gyraldus, *Opera* I, 298); '*Harpedophorum* Mercurium etiam appellatum legimus, ab Harpe falce, qua Argum mactasse ferunt: de Harpe Ovidius, Hyginus, alii' (*ibid.*, p. 303).

[2] Hill, nos. 1003, 1005. A third medal, no. 1004, has no design but a punning inscription which harps on the verb *carpere*, perhaps alluding to one of the princes of Carpi.

[3] *Ibid.*, no. 758.

[4] Costanza Bentivoglio who married Antonio Pico della Mirandola and thence became countess of Concordia, combined *Constantia* and *Concordia* in her name; and since the only known reverse of her medal (Hill, no. 997) shows an image of *Constantia* cast after the same model as our fig. 52, one cannot but wonder whether it was not from her that Maria Poliziana adopted the Constantia-Concordia imagery. Their medals are of the same size; and as Hill has pointed out in many other instances, the combination of obverse and reverse that has come down to us, is not always the original one.

[5] Warburg's concept of a 'plastische Ausgleichsformel', which he developed in his essay on Francesco Sassetti (*op. cit.*, pp. 151, 158, 364 f.), grew out of his early interest in the appearance of the Venus-Virgo (*ibid.*, pp. 30 f., with additional notes pp. 312–16).

[6] P. Schubring, *Cassoni* (1923), pl. 48 ff. Examples in the Yale University Art Gallery; Kestner Museum, Hannover, etc.

new courtly twist in France and England, where its potentialities were developed more fully than in Italy itself. The imagery of Diane de Poitiers, for example, in which her role as the king's mistress is unblushingly celebrated, would seem to contradict her part as Diana, were it not that Diana is here a Venus in disguise, at times in fact so little disguised that she appears actually as Venus. In a characteristic portrait of her attributed to François Clouet,[1] the mythological 'bath of Diana' is transformed into a *toilette de Vénus*, with all the appurtenances of the goddess of love, including a background-scene directly quoted from Titian's *Venus of Urbino*.

And in view of the Italian sources of Elizabethan imagery, perhaps the question is not unjustified whether the worship of Queen Elizabeth as Diana was not also a cult of Venus in disguise. Among the portraits of the queen by Isaac Oliver there is one that bears, in the engraving of Crispin van de Passe, an inscription which unmistakably refers to the verse in Virgil:

Virginis os habitumque geris, divina virago.[2]

A similar allusion occurs again in Spenser, where the combination of 'Thenots Embleme: *O quam te memorem virgo?*' and 'Hobbinolls Embleme: *O dea certe*' is thus explained in the Gloss: 'This Poesye is taken out of Virgile, and there of him used in the person of Aeneas to his mother Venus, appearing to him in likenesse of one of Dianaes damosells. . . . To which similitude of divinitie Hobbinoll comparing the excelency of Eliza . . .' etc.[3]

But to return to the virago on the Albizzi medal: the idea that Chastity is a weapon of Venus, which arouses the passions it professes to restrain, lends a particular significance to the bow and arrow which the figure triumphantly displays (fig. 14). These are unquestionably the weapons of Diana—*virginis arma*, as Virgil says. But they are also the weapons of Cupid. In their operation the two implements reveal between themselves what Plato called ἁρμονία τόξου (literally, 'the harmony of the bow'), which he said Heraclitus had defined as 'the One united by disunion'.[4] While the arrow flies and hits blindly like passion,[5] the bow, held steadily in its place, is used

[1] Worcester (Mass.) Art Museum. The decorations of the Fountain Room in the Château d'Anet, the titles of which are listed in Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century*, p. 135 note 5, were also designed in pairs of opposites—Sobriety and Inebriation, Love extinguished and Love returned, Virginity tested and protected, Narcissus opposed to Hermaphroditus, etc.

[2] Hind, *Engraving in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* I (1952), p. 282, no. 1; pl. 141.

[3] *Shepheardes Calender, April.* Cf. also *Faerie Queene* IV, Proem 4, in which Elizabeth is celebrated as 'the Queene of love'.

[4] *Symposium* 187A.

[5] On the symbol of the 'blind arrow', see Pico's description of *desiderio naturale, Commento* II, ii (ed. Garin II, iv, p. 490): '. . . al fin suo dirizate come la sagitta del sagittario al suo bersaglio, el quale non è dalla sagitta cognosciuto, ma da colui che con occhio . . . verso quello la muove'. The same image in Ficino, *Theologia Platonica* XIV, viii (*Opera*, p. 318), also XIV, i (*ibid.*, p. 306).

with a seeing eye, and because its strength resides in its tension, it is a symbol of restraint. A bow without arrow, and an arrow without bow, are clearly of no possible use; but combined they impart energy to each other, and illustrate that 'harmony in discord' which Pico defined as the essence of Pulchritudo: '. . . la contrarietà unita, e la discordia concorde, il che si può per vera definizione assignare di essa bellezza, cioè che non sia altro che una amica inimicizia e una concorde discordia.'[1]

In the mysterious allegory by Titian in the Borghese Gallery, which represents an initiation into Love (fig. 15), bow and arrow are carried by two separate figures. The one bringing the bow resembles the chaste huntress Diana, while her companion, who holds the arrows, is a passionate figure partly nude. They present their gifts to a crowned Venus attended by two cupids, one blind, the other seeing. As bow and arrow belong together, so the perfect Venus combines passion and perspicacity. While she listens to the advice of the seeing cupid, she herself puts a blinding band over the eyes of his restive brother so that he may bring knowledge to fruition in joy. 'Nature has decreed', according to Pico, 'that to every cognitive virtue be joined an appetitive virtue', and he adds that the 'appetitive virtue as such is blind and does not know' (*virtù appetitiva . . . per sè è cieca e non conosce*).[2] Yet it is the state of appetitive 'unknowing', a state of *docta ignorantia*, for which knowledge aims and in which it finds its fulfilment: 'Love is said by Orpheus to be without eyes because he is above the intellect.' Or in the words of Ficino: 'Amanti convenit ut re amata fruatur et gaudeat . . . inquirenti autem ut videat. . . . Gaudium igitur in homine felice superat visionem.' In the verses of Lorenzo de' Medici, the same theme was further developed as an 'altercation' between 'Sight' (*veder*) and 'Joy' (*goder*), between perceptive meditation and voluptuous pleasure, in which pleasure was proved to be higher and more profound than meditation:

A chi cerca veder, veder conviensi;
Ma all'amante della cosa che ama
Goder sempre e fruir piacere immensi.[3]

And he reasons out in a persistently recurring argument that 'sight' is only a preliminary to 'joy':

Render ragion possiamo a chi richiede
A che fin noi cerchiam, ch' è per fruire
Quel ben che nostra mente prima vede.[4]

[1] *Commento* II, vi (ed. Garin II, viii, p. 495).
[2] *Commento* II, iii (ed. Garin II, v, pp. 491 f.).
[3] *Altercazione* IV, 139 ff.
[4] *Ibid.* V, 19 ff.

Thus the inquiring spirit, while retaining an advisory role, must in the end give way to the impulsiveness of passion because 'the soul by love acquires more of divine goodness than it does by knowledge'.[1] In the *Dream of Poliphilus* the supremacy of joyous desire is illustrated by the victory of the hero's emotional over his reasonable self. At the gate of the ultimate mystery, to which he has been led by the two guides Logistike and Telemia, he is suddenly abandoned by Logistike and entrusts himself to Telemia alone.[2] It is consistent with the ancillary part of Logistike that in the composition of Titian's painting the deliberating Cupid and the Diana-like nymph are in a marginal position, while the foreground and the more central place are assigned to the blindfolded Cupid and the nymph holding the arrows. The action of the chief figure sustains this conclusion. She herself blindfolds the cupid in her lap.[3]

It is unfortunate that the painting, which ought to be called *The Blinding of Amor*, has acquired in fairly recent years the misleading title *The Education of Amor*. This designates an entirely different scene (painted, for example, by Correggio)[4] in which Amor is taught by Mercury how to read, in its turn a very popular subject in the Renaissance because it represents the love of learning. While a painting of that subject would demonstrate the nature and growth of intellectual love (*amor intellectualis*), Titian's picture shows, on the contrary, how intellectual love is not an end in itself but must find its fruition in passion (*voluptas*). In the seventeenth century the picture went under a title more clearly inappropriate to the characters portrayed but less misleading. It was listed by Ridolfi as *The Graces*.[5] However wrong, this older title retains a vestige of the truth, for the picture does illustrate a mystical initiation for which the three Graces had served as a figure.

[1] *Ibid.* IV, 104 f.

[2] *Hypnerotomachia*, fol. i ii^{r},—not, incidentally, a Venetian idiosyncrasy, but common to all writers on mysteries, Telemia deriving from τελεταί.

[3] Panofsky's attempt to interpret the painting on the theory that the blindfolded Cupid represents a frivolous and inferior form of love from which the main figure advisedly withdraws, leads to the hardly tenable description that 'she has already stopped blindfolding him' (*Studies in Iconology*, p. 166). The position of her fingers rather suggests the reverse: they are tying, not loosening, the 'knot of love'. I notice that in the recent guides to the Galleria Borghese by Aldo de Rinaldis (1935) and Paola della Pergola (1952), the scene is correctly described as 'Venus blindfolding Amor' (*Venere che benda Amore*).

[4] National Gallery, London.

[5] Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell' arte*, ed. Hadeln, I (1914), p. 197: 'le Gratie con Cupidine ed alcune pastorelle'. Clearly one of Ridolfi's confusions, but which seems to rest on an anterior tradition. According to Pergola, *The Borghese Gallery*, p. 58, the painting is 'called the "Three Graces" in the ancient inventories of the Gallery'.

CHAPTER V

VIRTUE RECONCILED WITH PLEASURE

Among the most engaging paintings by the young Raphael is the little picture of the *Dream of Scipio* (fig. 33), now in the National Gallery, which was presumably painted for a young Scipione Borghese.[1] The young hero lies at the foot of a laurel tree,[2] apparently dreaming of his fame. Two women approach him. The sterner one presents him with a sword and a book, the more gracious offers a flower. These three attributes—book, sword, and flower—signify the three powers in the soul of man: intelligence, strength and sensibility, or (as Plato called them) mind, courage, and desire. In the Platonic scheme of the 'tripartite life', two gifts, the intellectual and moral, are of the spirit while the third gift (the flower) is of the senses. Together they constitute a complete man, but as they mingle in different proportions they produce different characters and dispositions: 'The philosophers', wrote Fulgentius in copying out Plutarch, who in his turn restated a view of Plato, 'have decided that the life of humanity consists of three parts, of which the first is called theoretical, the second practical, the third pleasurable: which in Latin are named *contemplativa, activa,* and *voluptuaria.*'[3]

In the *Dream of Scipio* by Macrobius, which ends with a discourse on *tripartita philosophia,* the hero is warned against the voluptuous life and urged to pursue the active and contemplative virtues—*perfectionis geminae praecepta.*[4] The 'precepts of twofold

[1] Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege,* pp. 76 ff., who conclusively identified the subject with Scipio; independently observed by R. Eisler, *Revue archéologique* XXXII (1930), pp. 134 f. Although not mentioned by these authors, it was surely Macrobius's commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* that suggested the idea of a 'dreaming Scipio', a subject genuinely antique and Neoplatonic (cf. Boyancé, *Etudes sur le songe de Scipion,* 1936, pp. 121–46; 173 ff.), and not created *ad hoc* by Raphael's adaptation of a 'dreaming Hercules' from a Northern woodcut illustrating Sebastian Brant (Panofsky, *op. cit.,* p. 79).

[2] 'Lauri residens iuvenis viridante sub umbra' (Silius Italicus, *Punica* XV, 18). The derivation of the episode from the Choice of Hercules (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* II, i, after Prodicus) remained a favourite topic among eighteenth-century antiquaries; for example, Joseph Spence, *Polymetis* (1747), p. 142, who added an execrable poem of his own on The Choice of Hercules, twenty-seven stanzas long (pp. 155–62). Panofsky (*op. cit.,* p. 38 note 1) cites G. A. Cubaeus, *Xenophontis Hercules Prodicius et Silii Italici Scipio* (1797), and T. C. Schmid, *De virtute Prodicia et Siliana* (1812).

[3] Fulgentius, *Mythologiae* II, 1: 'De iudicio Paridis'. Cf. Plutarch, *De liberis educandis* 10 (*Moralia* 8A), which repeats Plato, *Republic* 441, 580D ff.

[4] *In Somnium Scipionis* II, xvii, 183.

perfection' are impressed upon him also in Raphael's picture, but not to the exclusion of Pleasure. While he is offered the sword and the book with which to pursue the arduous path of virtue, suggested in the background by the steep rock and the spire rising above it, he is also offered the pleasing flower: the landscape on the right is a friendly valley. His posture suggests that he inclines toward virtue, but the flower is also part of his dream; and in that he follows the morality of Ficino, for whom the *triplex vita* was a persistent subject of meditation. 'No reasonable being doubts', he wrote to Lorenzo de' Medici,[1] 'that there are three kinds of life: the contemplative, the active, and the pleasurable (*contemplativa*, *activa*, *voluptuosa*). And three roads to felicity have been chosen by men: wisdom, power, and pleasure (*sapientia*, *potentia*, *voluptas*).' To pursue any one of them at the expense of the others is, according to Ficino, wrong, or even blasphemous. Paris chose pleasure, Hercules heroic virtue, and Socrates chose wisdom rather than pleasure. All three were punished by the deities they had spurned, and their lives ended in disaster. 'Our Lorenzo, however, instructed by the oracle of Apollo, has neglected none of the gods. He saw the three [that is, the three goddesses who had appeared to Paris], and all three he adored according to their merits; whence he received wisdom from Pallas, power from Juno, and from Venus grace and poetry and music.' To compliment a prince on his universality by comparing his judgment to that of Paris, became a fixed formula of Renaissance euphuism. In Lyly's *Euphues and his England* (1580), Peele's *Arraignment of Paris* (1584), Sabie's *Pans Pipe* (1595), to name only a few,[2] the same compliment was addressed to Queen Elizabeth. It was carried to extreme in a painting at Hampton Court by Hans Eworthe, in which the Queen puts the three goddesses to shame because, as the inscription fulsomely asserts, she combines in herself the gifts which they possess only separately.[3] The flattery is more subdued in Raphael's *Scipio*. He humbly dreams of the gifts he is to receive. No doubt, he will accept them all three, but prudently divided in the proportion of 2 : 1.

It is a significant commentary on the painting that it had *The Three Graces* (fig. 34), now in Chantilly, as a companion piece. Both pictures are of the same size, and since they both came from the Borghese Collection, and are inscribed with consecutive numbers, there can be no doubt that they form a pair;[4] and they were still together in

[1] *Opera*, pp. 919 f. See also *Supplementum Ficinianum* I, pp. 80–6: 'De triplici vita et fine triplici'.

[2] Cf. E. C. Wilson, *England's Eliza* (1939), pp. 136, 147 f., 239 note.

[3] C. H. Collins Baker, *Catalogue of the Pictures at Hampton Court* (1929), p. 47, no. 635 (*Inv.* 301), where the inscription is quoted. The Latin distichs and the early date (1569) recall the Queen's visits to Cambridge (1564) and to Oxford (1566), which occasioned volumes of complimentary verses 'in Greek and Latin, Hebrew, Caldee, and English' (Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 70, 72). It is among these, rather than the later English masques and pastorals, that a strict parallel to the inscription might be sought.

[4] Panofsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 142 f.

the collection of Sir Thomas Lawrence.[1] But they must not be imagined as a diptych, which is excluded by their square shape, and also by the change of scale in the figures. It is more likely that they were placed back to back, as they are in our illustrations, the two parts being related to each other like the obverse and reverse of a medal.

Although the three Graces in the picture look indistinguishable, they are characterized very lightly by a certain difference of attributes. Castitas wears a loin cloth, and has no jewels around her neck. Voluptas, on the opposite side, is distinguished by a long necklace with a sizable jewel. The Grace in the centre is more modest. The chain hanging from her hair is shorter than the necklace of her neighbour, and also the jewel attached to it is smaller. Not quite so abstemious as Chastity, nor so liberally adorned as Pleasure, Beauty holds the balance between them, being chaste and pleasurable in one. She touches Chastity's shoulder as she turns toward Pleasure; and so subtly is the distribution of weights devised that, although the group retains its classical symmetry, the emphasis is decidedly on the right. Two apples are here offered, as against one;[2] and the two little chains also add their weight. Only one foot of the left figure is freely visible, so that her counter-movement has little support. And the landscape in the background sustains the asymmetrical action, the expanse of water flowing freely toward the right while it stops short behind the figure of Chastity. All these features combine to convey the same moral: Beauty inclines Chastity toward Love. The proportion of 2 : 1 is weighted on the side of Pleasure.

The golden apples in the hands of the Graces characterize them as the servants of Venus; for it is to her that the golden apples are sacred, and she is occasionally described as holding them herself: 'Mala aurea tria ferebat.'[3] In Politian's vision of the garden of Venus, the fruits it bears are *pomi d'oro*.[4] As attributes of the Graces, apples are not so unusual as has been claimed.[5] Cartari and Gyraldus described the Graces as *nexis*

[1] Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *Raphael* I (1882), pp. 202 note, 209 note.

[2] There is an interesting *pentimento* in the painting. The central Grace originally held no apple but touched the shoulders of the two other Graces symmetrically. The alteration stresses the asymmetry.

[3] Gyraldus, *Opera* I, 387; also Cartari, *Imagini*, s.v. 'Venere': 'con tre pomi d'oro in una mano'. The three apples which Hercules got from the Hesperides were also 'mala aurea Veneri consecrata' (*Libellus de deorum imaginibus* xxii, MS *cit.*, fol. 6r; *ed. cit.*, p. 125), but the suggestion that because of these Herculean apples Raphael's picture of the Graces should be associated with the Hesperides is surely unfounded, particularly if the figure on the obverse is Scipio and not Hercules. In the Venus-fresco of the Palazzo Schifanoia the Graces hold four apples, not three: which would also seem to rule out any necessary association of these apples with Hercules or the Hesperides. The golden apples of Atalanta were again apples of Venus, so described by Alciati, *Emblemata*, no. 61.

[4] *Giostra* I, xciv, 2. On apples as general attributes of Venus, see Pierio Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, fols. 394 ff., 'De malo', with a long excursus on the ball game of apples, after Philostratus, *Imagines* I, 6.

[5] 'Die goldenen Kugeln auf unserem Gemälde . . . freilich ein Unikum', Salis, *op. cit.*, p. 154. The idea that the Graces might be imagined as playing ball, goes back as far as Chrysippus. Seneca, *De beneficiis* II, xvii, 3 (also II, xxxii, 1): 'Volo Chrysippi nostri uti similitudine de pilae lusu.' Hence Ripa, *Iconologia*, s.v. 'Gratie': 'perciò Crisippo

manibus poma gestantes,[1] and as they are supposed to unfold the unity of Venus, it is not unreasonable for them to hold her fruit.

In offering these gifts of love, the Graces counterbalance the demands of Scipio's heroic dream. Instead of two gifts of the spirit and one of the senses, they bring two delectable gifts and one of restraint. While the hero is advised to adopt a rule of action by which he subordinates his pleasure to his duties, he is here invited to soften those severities and allow virtue to come to fruition in joy. The discipline of Scipio is only one side of the picture; the other is his affectionate liberality. *Virtus* and *Amor* belong together:

For what is noble should be sweet.

[Ben Jonson, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*]

* * * * *

The combination of a martial spirit with amiability, which is the moral of Raphael's *Scipio and the Graces*, was so essential and natural to the Renaissance code of chivalry that it would seem unnecessary to assign to it any hidden roots in an antiquarian study of mysteries. Nor was the double life led by the average courtier, that of a warrior and of a lover, so novel as to require philosophers to propose it. Yet when it came to sanctioning these two lives, and to justifying and explaining their relation to each other, philosophers and antiquaries were much in demand; and as might be expected, they made the most of the opportunity to season glorification with paradox.

The ancient 'mystery' upon which they seized, was the unlawful union of Mars and Venus, from which issued a daughter named Harmony. Born from the god of strife and the goddess of love, she inherits the contrary characters of her parents: *Harmonia est discordia concors*.[2] But her illegitimate birth, far from being a blemish, was taken for a sign of mystical glory, according to a rule set forth very clearly in Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'amore*. In discussing the love and procreation of the gods as metaphors for universal forces in nature, he explained that 'when this union of the two parents occurs regularly in nature, it is called marriage by the poets, and the partners are called hus-

assimigliava quelli che danno e ricevono il benefitio, a quelli che giuocano alla palla . . . .' The same image in Plutarch, *De genio Socratis* 13 (*Moralia* 582F), tr. Xylander, p. 485: 'Nam si pulchrum est amicis benefacere, non est turpe ab amicis beneficium accipere. Gratia enim non minus accipiente quam dante opus habet, ab utrique perficitur ad pulchritudinem. Qui vero non accipit, tanquam pilam recte obiectam dedecorat, decidentem frustra.' On the ex-libris of Johannes Cuspinianus, which derives from a Cranach portrait (cf. H. A. von Kleehoven, 'Cranachs Bildnisse des Dr. Cuspinian und seiner Frau', *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen* XLVIII, 1927, p. 231, fig. 1), the Graces, inscribed DO-ACCIPIO-REFERO, are represented in the act of playing ball.

[1] The phrase in the Latin version of Cartari (1687, p. 219) is the same as in Gyraldus, *loc. cit.* I, 387.

[2] Cf. Gafurius, *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum*, frontispiece, also fols. 2^v, 97^r. Among ancient sources see Horace, *Epistolae* I, xii, 19; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 433; Lucan, *Pharsalia* I, 98, and above all Plutarch as quoted below, p. 82.

band and wife; but when the union is an extraordinary one, it is styled amorous or adulterous, and the parents who bring forth are styled lovers.'[1]

In reflecting on the extraordinary nature of Harmony, which became the core of his theory of beauty, Pico della Mirandola delved rather deeply into Plutarch's theory of Mars and Venus. 'It is well-known', wrote Plutarch in the essay *De Iside et Osiride*, 'that, in the fables of the Greeks, Harmony was born from the union of Venus and Mars: of whom the latter is fierce and contentious, the former generous and pleasing. And see how philosophers have agreed with this. Heraclitus openly called war the father, king and master of all things, and declared that Homer, in wishing that discord would vanish from the councils of gods and men, had secretly blasphemed against the origin of all things because they are born from strife and adversity. . . . Empedocles calls the force effective of good by the name of love and friendship, . . . and the destructive force he calls pernicious strife. . . . The Pythagoreans attach several names to each of these forces. . . . But Plato, concealing and foreshadowing his opinion in many places, calls the first of these contrary principles the Same, and the second the Other. . . . For mixed is the origin of this world, and its frame composed of contrarious powers. . . .'[2]

And in *De Homero*, included by Xylander in Plutarch's *Moralia*, we read again: 'This is what the fable of Mars and Venus suggests, of whom the latter corresponds to Empedoclean friendship, the former to Empedoclean strife. . . . And with this agrees what is transmitted by other poets, that Harmony was born from the union of Mars and Venus: for when the contraries, high and deep, are tempered by a certain proportion, a marvellous consonance arises between them.'[3]

[1] Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, ed. S. Caramella (1929), p. 108; tr. F. Friedeberg-Seeley and J. H. Barnes (1937), p. 122. On the humorous illustration of the doctrine in the *Parnassus* by Mantegna see Wind, *Bellini's Feast of the Gods* (1948), pp. 9–20; with further notes on Homeric laughter in 'Mantegna's Parnassus', *Art Bulletin* XXXI (1949), pp. 224–31. It is interesting that Plato's censure of the laughter of the gods did not deter Proclus from reading a cosmogonic mystery into it, which he found foreshadowed in the *Timaeus*, the *Republic*, and the *Parmenides*. The relevant passages are cited by Koch, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*, pp. 253 f.; for their interpretation see Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, pp. 891 f.; Dieterich, *Abraxas*, p. 28; also K. Preisendanz, *Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* II (1931), pp. 95 ff., 110 ff.

[2] *De Iside et Osiride* 48 (*Moralia* 370D–371A). The argument agrees with *Enneads* IV, viii, 1 ff., where Empedocles and Heraclitus are explicitly cited, and also with *Enneads* IV, iv, 40 f.: 'How are enchantments produced? . . . through the natural concord of like principles and contrariety of unlike. . . . The true magic is the Love contained within the universe, and the Hate likewise. This is the original enchanter and master of potions. . . . In all the universe there is but one general harmony though it be formed of contraries' (tr. Dodds). See also Plato, *Sophist* 242D–243A.

[3] *Moralia*, tr. Xylander, p. 25. Calcagnini paraphrased the passage in 'De concordia', *Opera*, p. 414: '. . . quod in citharis maxime agnoscitur, ut ex dissonis fiat concentus. Sic enim prudenter veteres Harmoniam ex Marte et Venere genitam existimarunt, quod gravis et acuta seorsum opponi videantur: quom vero una componantur, incredibilem suavitatem auribus reddant.' Another example in Codrus Urceus, *Orationes seu sermones* (1502), fol. G i^{r}: 'Fabula etiam quam de Venere et Marte coniunctis scripsit Homerus, amicitiam Empedoclis significat, quando vero dissoluntur contentionem . . . unde ex Veneris et Martis coitu fingitur nata har-

It is clear that Pico had these passages in mind when, writing 'On the general nature of Beauty',[1] he defined beauty as a 'composite' and inherently 'contrarious' principle, without fearing the heresies that it might entail. His account may be said to go to the root of the matter, and despite its redundancy, it must be quoted at length:[2]

'And for this reason no simple thing can be beautiful. From which it follows that there is no beauty in God because beauty includes in it a certain imperfection, that is, it must be composed in a certain manner: which in no way applies to the first cause. . . . But below it [the first cause] begins beauty because there begins contrariety, without which there would be no creation but only God. Nor do contrariety and discord between various elements suffice to constitute a creature, but by due temperation the contrariety must become united and the discord made concordant; and this may be offered as the true definition of Beauty, namely, that it is nothing else than an amicable enmity and a concordant discord. For this reason did Heraclitus say that war and contention are the father and master[3] of all things, and, concerning Homer, that he who curses strife may be said to have blasphemed against nature. But Empedocles spoke more perfectly when he introduced discord not by itself but together with concord as the origin of all things, understanding by discord the variety of elements of which they are composed, and by concord their union; and therefore he said that only in God is there no discord because in him there is no union of diverse elements, but his unity is simple, without any composition. And since in the constitution of created things it is necessary that the union overcomes the strife (otherwise the thing would perish because its elements would fall apart)—for this reason is it said by the poets that Venus loves Mars, because Beauty, which we call Venus, cannot subsist without contrariety; and that Venus tames and mitigates Mars, because the tempering power restrains and overcomes the strife and hate which persist between the contrary elements. Similarly, according to the ancient astrologers, whose opinion Plato and Aristotle follow, and according to the writings of Abenazra the Spaniard and also of Moses, Venus

monia. . . . Hoc est quod ex contrariis sonis, gravibus scilicet et acutis simul proportione mixtis, nascitur consonantia.'

[1] *Commento* II, vi (ed. Garin II, viii, pp. 495 f.).

[2] The argument which follows, is difficult to reconcile with *Enneads* I, vi, where Plotinus insists on the phenomenon of simple beauty, and with *Enneads* V, viii and VI, vii, 33, where 'intelligible beauty' is defined as pure and without parts. See also Ficino, *Opera*, pp. 1792 f. Apparently Pico felt certain, to the point of Platonic heterodoxy, that if the One is assumed to be above Beauty (*Enneads* VI, ix, 11), it follows that Beauty must depend on composition. As in the case of intelligence and will, it suited his radicalism to stress the inapplicability of beauty to the supreme One more ruthlessly than Ficino, who had also treated of God's 'intelligence' in positive terms (*Theologia Platonica* II, ix f., *Opera*, pp. 103 ff.), which Pico tended to ridicule. In *Commento* I, i (ed. Garin, p. 462) he reflected with amusement that 'a great Platonist' had felt disturbed because Plotinus seemed to deny intelligence to the supreme One.

[3] The Italian text, which gives the word *genetrice*, is clearly faulty at this point, since Pico was transcribing Heraclitus fr. 53. Possibly a word like *governatore* for βασιλεύς was shortened in the first draft and then wrongly expanded by a copyist.

was placed in the centre of heaven next to Mars, because she must tame his temperament which is by nature destructive and corrupting, just as Jupiter offsets the malice of Saturn. And if Mars were always subordinated to Venus, that is, the contrariety of the component elements to their due temperation, nothing would ever perish.'

The many and famous Renaissance idylls (figs. 54–56) in which the victorious Venus, having subdued the fearful Mars by love, is seen playing with his armour, or allowing her cupids and infant satyrs to play with it, all celebrate this peaceable hope: that Love is more powerful than Strife;[1] that the god of war is inferior in strength to the goddess of grace and amiability. In Cossa's fresco of the *Triumph of Venus*, in the Palazzo Schifanoia (fig. 57), the vanquished Mars not only kneels before her but he is actually chained to her throne as a prisoner. The fetter of love, an amiable reminiscence of the more sinister chain contrived through the cunning of Vulcan, is reduced in Veronese's allegory of Mars and Venus (fig. 56) to a knot tied by a winged cupid.[2] But in the idylls of the same subject painted by Botticelli and Piero di Cosimo (figs. 54 f.) no chain or ribbon is required to demonstrate the bondage of Mars. Venus has put his fierceness to sleep. While Cossa's fresco of her triumph belongs to an astrological cycle and should be interpreted accordingly, any thought of 'sextile and trine aspects', which have occasionally been read into the paintings by Botticelli and Piero, would destroy their peculiar poetry. Since the planet Mars always retains, even when dominated by the planet Venus, a certain degree of boldness and bellicose fervour—a point clearly brought out by Ficino in *De amore* V, viii, and not neglected by Cossa—the reduction of Mars to a sleeping loving swain, surrounded by *amoretti* playing at war, is, with all due allowance for the wide influence of horoscopy, emphatically ***not*** an astrological image.

Botticelli has added a further touch of bucolic raillery by transforming the cupids into infant satyrs who impishly sneak into the armour surrendered by Mars. His formidable weapons are reduced to toys.[3] Only the wasps that buzz around the head of

[1] Compare Lucretius's famous invocation of Venus against Mars, *De rerum natura* I, 30–41. Also *Symposium* 196D, Mars 'the captive and Love is the lord, for love, the love of Aphrodite, masters him . . and the master is stronger than the servant.'

[2] The allegory is very involved. While Mars bends down in adoration and submission, his *forteꝛꝛa* is characterized as restraining *virtù* because it is he who holds up the garment of chastity that covers Venus; while she, by touching her breast from which milk flows, reveals *castità* as transformed into *carità* (a motive reminiscent of the *Caritas Romana*). The restraints of Love imposed by a noble *forteꝛꝛa* are playfully imitated on the right by a cupid using the sword of Mars to restrain the horse, which is already bound by its bridle.

[3] Cupids playing with the armour of Mars are common in ancient reliefs and epigrams which celebrate the triumphs of Amor, for example *Anthologia Graeca* XVI, 214 f. (Loeb Library V, p. 287, with illustration). In Lucian's *Herodotus*, cupids playing with martial weapons are introduced into Aëtion's painting of Alexander and Roxana; but instead of suggesting a triumph of love over war, their symbolic function is here the reverse: Lucian says that they signify Alexander's abiding 'love of war'.

the sleeper are a reminder of his pugnacious spirit: 'quod per vespam . . . pugnacitatem et infestum adversos hostes ingenium ostendebant'.[1] And as a marginal comment on the scene, the wasps should not be underrated: for although Venus 'tames and mitigates' the contentiousness of Mars, she also 'loves Mars because Beauty, which we call Venus, cannot subsist without contrariety'; and thus a union of sweetness and sting remains implicit in the *discordia concors* of Mars and Venus.[2]

The discordant element becomes more prominent when, instead of putting Mars to sleep, Venus adopts the martial weapons for her own. Dressed in armour (ὅπλα Κυθήρης), the *Venus victrix* or *Venus armata*[3] signifies the warfare of love: she is a compound of attraction and rejection, fostering her gracious aims by cruel methods. Like the 'bitter-sweet' pun of *amare-amaro*, to which Bembo devoted a whole book of the *Asolani*, the threatening equation of *amare-armare* became indispensable to lovesick sonneteers. Michelangelo employed it for his *cavalier armato*, and the ridiculous Armado recalled it in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Even Virgil's Diana-like Venus (fig. 14)—*virginis os habitumque gerens et virginis arma*—is but a variant of the *Venus armata*: a bellicose Venus who has donned the weapons which normally belong to her opponent—either Diana, Minerva, or Mars.

But again, while appearing armed, Venus may give to the armour a peaceable

[1] Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, fol. 31^{v}, s.v. 'Pugnacitas'; also fol. 189^{v}: 'De vespa', with illustration inscribed *pugnacitas*.

[2] In Alciati, *Emblemata*, no. 89, the amorous motto *dulce et amarum* is illustrated by the pseudo-Theocritean idyll (no. xix) of Cupid stung by bees while tasting honey, a subject which Melanchthon, Cranach, and Hans Sachs found singularly attractive (R. Förster, *Das Erbe der Antike*, 1911, pp. 6 f.). Sting and sweetness are also combined in a pair of humorous paintings by Piero di Cosimo representing *Silenus stung by Wasps* as a sequel to *Bacchus's Discovery of Honey* (after Ovid, *Fasti* III, 735–60, cf. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 59–63). Since these pictures were painted for a Vespucci, Gombrich was surely right in suspecting (*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* VIII, p. 49) that because of the *vespae* in their coat-of-arms, the Vespucci favoured paintings with wasps, and that Botticelli's *Mars and Venus* may have been one of them. But it is characteristic of Renaissance 'inventions' that the heraldic subject would not be introduced flatly for its own sake, but as motivated by the theme of the painting.

[3] The mythographical sources listed in Gyraldus, *Opera* I, 394 ('Venus armata') and I, 399 ('Venus victrix'); Cartari, *Imagini* (1571), pp. 544 ff. On the ancient image and its revival see L. Curtius, 'Zum Antikenstudium Tizians', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* XXVIII (1938), p. 236, who was the first to notice the *Venus victrix* in Renaissance imagery. The fusion of Venus with Minerva was stressed by R. Wittkower, 'Transformations of Minerva in Renaissance Imagery', *Journal of the Warburg Institute* II (1939), p. 202, but his illustrations (pl. 38) are open to doubt. In the painting of Minerva and Neptune (*ibid.*, fig. d), for which the old attribution to Garofalo is probably correct (see Wind, *Bellini's Feast of the Gods*, p. 39 note 10), the *seminuda mulieris imago* is not an intrusion of Venus but of *Honos*, as in Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, fol. 431^{v}; and the cuirass of Venus in the Marco Zoppo drawing (fig. c; our fig. 53) does not bear the insignia of Minerva; it is part of the *arma amoris* of the *Venus armata*, which refer to the warfare of love, cf. *Anthologia Graeca* XVI, 173, ὅπλα Κυθήρης. Only the engraving by Agostino Veneziano (*op. cit.*, fig. a) is possibly a Venus-Minerva because of the Gorgoneion on her shield, although Furtwängler, *Die antiken Gemmen* III (1900), pp. 336 f., reproduces a classical *Venus victrix* with a similar shield, figs. 183 f., Berlin, Altes Museum no. 11362. See also D. le Lasseur, *Les déesses armées* (1919), p. 187, on a black-figured amphora in the British Museum (B.254): 'le céramiste, qui a inscrit au dessus de la tête de la déesse le nom même d'Aphrodite, lui a donné l'arme caractéristique d'Athéné: l'égide frangée de serpents.'

motive. The martial Venus may stand for the strength that comes from love, for the fortitude that is inspired by charity,[1] or—in the reverse—for a sweetness derived from strength: *de forti dulcedo.*[2] In a poetical self-portrait by Navagero she introduces the rueful patriotism of a poet who accepts his martial calling with regret:

De imagine sui armata

Quid magis adversum bello est, bellique tumultu,
Quam Venus? ad teneros aptior illa jocos.
Et tamen armatam hanc magni pinxere Lacones,
Imbellique data est bellica parma Deae . . .
Sic quoque, non quod sim pugna versatus in ulla,
Haec humeris pictor induit arma meis.
Verum, hoc quod bello, hoc patriae quod tempore iniquo,
Ferre vel imbellem quemlibet arma decet.[3]

Thus, in response to the perilous hour, the heroic warrior disguises his softness by a display of steel, and compares himself, although he is a man, to the ambiguous figure of the *Venus armata.*

No doubt, the incongruity of the simile was a deliberate device in Navagero. He intended to perplex and surprise the beholder, and perhaps also to remind him that the martial Venus, originally a Spartan deity, was for Roman poets and orators a cryptic figure on which, Quintilian says, they exercised their wit: 'cur armata apud Lacaedemonios Venus'.[4] But side by side with the jocose tradition, which was inherited from the Greek epigrammatists, the Romans retained toward the armed Venus an attitude of religious respect. The ancestral goddess of the Julian house, she appears on gems and coins of Caesar and Augustus, as a martial figure of Roman peace, of victorious generosity relying on her strength.[5] The poets in the circle of the emperor Maximilian, in an attempt to revive the Augustan figure, called one of their poetic cycles *Die*

[1] Raphael's allegory of *Forteꝛꝛa-Carità* in the Stanza della Segnatura (on which see Wind, 'Platonic Justice designed by Raphael', *Journal of the Warburg Institute* I, 1937, pp. 69 f.) was fittingly compared by O. Fischel, *Raphael* (1948), p. 91, to the martial heroines of love in Ariosto, and he referred to Catarina Sforza as a historical embodiment of the type.

[2] *Aenigma Sampsonis* (Judges xiv, 14) discussed by Gyraldus, 'Aenigmata', *Opera* II, 621 f., with reference to a coin of Alfonso d'Este inscribed DE FORTI DULCEDO and showing bees nesting in a helmet, *Corpus nummorum italicorum* X (1927), pl. XXX, 23. The same image in Alciati, no. 45, with the motto EX BELLO PAX.

[3] Andreas Naugerius, *Orationes duae carminaque nonnulla* (Venice 1530), fol. 38[r]; cf. *Opera omnia*, ed. Vulpius (1718), pp. 218 f.

[4] *Institutio oratoria* II, iv, 26. The variety of answers may be gathered from *Anthologia Graeca* XVI, 171–7; also IX, 321, which advises Venus to disarm, and IX, 320, a palinode like Stesichorus's *Helen:* 'It is not true....' Ausonius, *Epigrammata* 64, a verbal combat between the armed Venus and Minerva, is a translation of *Anthologia Graeca* XVI, 174.

[5] Furtwängler, *Die antiken Gemmen* III, p. 304, illustrated *ibid.* I, pl. xxxvii, 30; xliv, 77 f.; lxiv, 65. H. Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* I (1923), pp. cxxiii, 98 f., nos. 599 ff.; II (1930), p. xlii.

geharnischte Venus.[1] But in the majority of Renaissance adaptations, of which Politian's witty epigram *In Venerem armatam* is perhaps the most ingenious,[2] she was allowed to drop the heroic style, presiding instead over scenes of domestic good-humour which celebrate the inescapable triumphs of love, *omnia vincit amor*. Curiously decked out in martial trophies, like Omphale when she made Hercules attend to the spindle while she usurped his club and lion's skin, she may look slightly encumbered by her outfit (fig. 53);[3] but since she has conquered the rudest god by her wiles, a touch of bizarrerie is not unbecoming to the *victrix* in this unequal battle.

In comparing the pictures of the martial Venus with Navagero's self-portrait as an amiable warrior, we find that the roles of Mars and Venus, which would normally be divided between man and woman, both recur within man and woman as such. The principle of the 'whole in the part' entails this rather baffling conclusion: that Venus is not only joined to Mars, but that his nature is an essential part of her own, and *vice versa*. True fierceness is thus conceived as potentially amiable, and true amiability as potentially fierce. In the perfect lover they coincide because he—or she—is the perfect warrior. But whenever their 'infolded' perfection is 'unfolded', the argument requires two opposing images which, by contrasting the martial with the amiable spirit, reveal their transcendent unity (fig. 58).[4]

It is curious to observe, and not irrelevant, that while these equations of fierce virtue and pliant love were playfully developed on Florentine medals in the pagan idiom of poetic theology (figs. 14, 49), the medals designed for Savonarola expressed a similar contrast in images that were inspired by his prophetic visions. GLADIUS DOMINI SUPER TERRAM CITO ET VELOCITER, SPIRITUS DOMINI SUPER TERRAM COPIOSE ET ABUNDANTER (fig. 66)[5] The wrathful symbol of the God of vengeance whose sword or dagger hovers over the earth, is not only

[1] Cf. Lessing, *Schriften*, ed. Lachmann, XVI, p. 451; XVIII, p. 321.

[2] *Opera* II, fol. 102v.

[3] Campbell Dodgson, *A Book of Drawings formerly ascribed to Mantegna* (1923), pl. 25; now attributed to Marco Zoppo, cf. A. E. Popham and P. Pouncey, *Italian Drawings in the British Museum* (1950), no. 260. On the iconography see above, p. 85 note 3.

[4] Hill, no. 858, medal of Rodrigo de Bivar, inscribed QUORUM OPUS ADEST. Since the obverse shows the portrait of Rodrigo alone, the inscription and image of the reverse refer to the valour and grace combined in his person. Hill's assumption that the presence of Venus refers to Rodrigo's 'matrimonial prospects' in Rome, which would restrict the date and purpose of the medal to the year 1497–8, is iconographically inconclusive. Nor should the employment of an Italian medallist by the Spanish prince be cited in support of that date, since his Spanish castle La Calahorra, in the Sierra Nevada, was rebuilt by him in the Italian style with the help of Italian workmen, and trimmed in Carrara marble specially imported. See Carl Justi, 'Die Einführung der Renaissance in Granada', *Miscellaneen aus drei Jahrhunderten spanischen Kunstlebens*, I (1908), pp. 218–23. The mythological and emblematic reliefs which, according to Justi, adorn the window-frames and staircases of La Calahorra, might possibly offer a natural parallel to the Italian workmanship of the medal. Justi calls the building 'the earliest monument of pure Italian workmanship in this realm . . . a Spanish counterpart to the palace of Urbino'.

[5] Hill, no. 1080. Inscription and image derive from a visionary dream recorded by Savonarola in his *Compendium revelationum* (1514, fol. 5).

contrasted in this medal with the burning love of the winged dove rising to heaven, but these are the contrary aspects of one deity: the god of vengeance is the god of love. His justice is mercy, His anger pity; His punishment itself is sent as a blessing because it purges the soul of sin. The famous conversions performed by Savonarola were helped by an inherent affinity of thought between pagan and Christian mysticism. The same tensions, conflicts, and contradictions which have so often been ascribed to the incompatibility between Renaissance paganism and Christianity, prevailed actually within each of these rival attitudes; and that made communication between them so easy. The pagan courtier who thought of himself as inspired by a Venus-Diana or a Venus-Mars, was quite accustomed to translate his ideal of action into a pair of Christian virtues: *carità* united with *fortezza*. For he would recall the divine identity of wrath and love which is the secret of the Bible. 'There is', as we may remember from Pico,[1] 'this diversity between God and man, that God contains in him all things because he is their source, whereas man contains in him all things because he is their centre.' In the centre the opposites are held in balance, but in the source they coincide. In so far as man therefore approaches his own perfection, he distantly imitates the deity. Balance is but an echo of divine transcendence.

The wise Federigo da Montefeltre who, as a successful condottiere, delighted in cultivating the arts of peace, expressed his faith in harmonious balance through the discordant symbol of a cannon ball, which he placed under the protection of the thundering Jupiter. On his medal (fig. 59) the three stars in the sky form a constellation of Jupiter between Mars and Venus, and their symmetry is repeated in the group of emblems below; the sword and cuirass belonging to Mars, the whisk-broom and myrtle to Venus, while the ball in the centre is dedicated to *Jupiter tonans*, whose flying eagle, with lightning in its claws, carries the unusual still-life on its wings.[2] Although the balance looks safe, it is not solid: for the slightest tip in the wings of the eagle would set the cannon-ball rolling. The inscription says, however, that Venus 'touches' the threatening Jupiter, who enables her to counterbalance Mars. Yet contrary to other triumphs of Venus (figs. 54–57), the design suggests that her complete dominion over Mars might also set the cannon-ball rolling. The supreme god alone is the guardian of equity, the source and arbiter of the *discordia concors*, of which Mars and Venus are the component parts.

[1] See above, p. 53.

[2] Hill, no. 304. Although it is known, and explicitly stated by Hill, that Federigo da Montefeltre used the emblem of a bombshell in other instances, the cannon ball in the medal has not been recognized as such, despite the reference to *Jupiter tonans* in the inscription. Giehlow, who identified all the other emblems in the design, assumed that the sphere must refer to Jupiter but interpreted it as a symbol of the earth, 'Die Hieroglyphenkunde des Humanismus in der Allegorie der Renaissance', *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* XXXII (1915), p. 37. The lightning in the claws of the eagle, while easily mistaken for a torse (Hill, *loc. cit.*), was correctly described by Giehlow.

CHAPTER VI

'RIPENESS IS ALL'

The theory that 'transcendence' is a source of 'balance' because it reveals the coincidence of opposites in the supreme One, is a doctrine of such extreme dialectical nicety that it may seem strange it should ever have succeeded in firing the artistic and practical imagination of the Renaissance. Granting that artists, poets, princes, and merchants conversed with philosophers and could acquire from them a general knowledge of metaphysics without having to master its technical detail—granting furthermore that this particular doctrine has, by virtue of being a paradox, a striking quality easy to remember—and granting finally that it often takes less time to grasp an enigma which is bound up in a knot than to follow a straight argument of indefinite length—there still remains a certain suspicion, which it would not be right to dismiss, that the subject is too esoteric for the wide success it apparently enjoyed.

But in making a broad appeal without losing its depth, the doctrine profited by its own theory of translatability. The mystical scale as such allowed for so many levels of understanding, the principle of 'the whole in the part' permitted so many kinds of foreshadowings and foreshortenings, that the speculative phases of the argument could remain hidden in the clouds, and yet be accurately 'mirrored' in a practical adage. Mystical Platonism thus fulfilled the prerequisite of any philosophy fashionable in its day: it combined the obscure with the familiar. But to secure this junction, a magic word is always needed, a felicitous phrase sufficiently compact to be quickly grasped and easily repeated, and at the same time sufficiently wide and mysterious to suggest a comprehensive philosophy of life. Characteristically, the indispensable word was found by the humanists in an ancient grammarian.

Among the rambling manuals of grammar and morals, into which the humanists liked to dip, none was more admired than the *Attic Nights* by Aulus Gellius,[1] the model

[1] H. Baron, 'Aulus Gellius in the Renaissance and a Manuscript from the School of Guarino', *Studies in Philology* XLVIII (1951), pp. 107–25.

of Politian's *Miscellanea*. In a chapter on the adverb *mature*, in which he discussed at some length what is meant by 'ripening', Gellius had introduced a motto of the emperor Augustus which recommended a combination of speed with patience, of daring abandon with prudent restraint.[1] As Erasmus explained in the *Adagia*,[2] σπεῦδε βραδέως or *festina lente* ('make haste slowly') became the most widely cherished Renaissance maxim; and those who chose it as a device, made a sport of expressing the same idea by an unlimited variety of images. A dolphin around an anchor (fig. 43), a tortoise carrying a sail, a diamond ring entwined with foliage, a sail attached to a column, a butterfly on a crab, a remora twisting around an arrow, an eagle and a lamb, a blindfolded lynx, a spur and a bridle, an aged and a youthful reaper joined in carrying huge baskets of harvest,[3]—these and innumerable other emblematic combinations were adopted to signify the rule of life that ripeness is achieved by a growth of strength in which quickness and steadiness are equally developed.

The ability to let things mature was thus to exert, like a double-faced Janus, the gift of watchful energy. One should always follow Aristotle's Good Counsel: deliberate slowly, but then act very fast.[4] However shocking to a less flexible sense of morals,

[1] Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* X, xi.

[2] The article on *festina lente*, which appeared for the first time in the Aldine edition of 1508 (*Chil.* II, no. 1), grew larger with every new edition of the *Adagia*, in its final version filling six folio pages. Cf. L. Dorez, 'Etudes Aldines', *Revue des bibliothèques* VI (1896), pp. 143–60, 237 f.; L. Volkmann, *Bilderschriften der Renaissance* (1923), p. 72.

[3] Listed in the same order as above, these emblems were used, among others, by the following: (1) Aldo Manuzio, after a coin of Titus; (2) Duke Cosimo I de' Medici; (3) Ercole I d'Este; (4) Lionello d'Este; (5) Jacopo Strada, after a coin of Augustus; (6) Andrea Alciati, after Erasmus (*Adagia*, s.v. *festina lente*); (7) Pietro Pomponazzi; (8) Lionello and Francesco d'Este; (9) Achille Bocchi; (10) again Lionello d'Este. The inscription DUPLEX GLORIA on Pomponazzi's medal (fig. 67), which shows the pride of the eagle combined with the humility of the lamb, alludes to his use of 'twofold truth', so often mistaken for a subterfuge, although it actually reveals a cautious daring in pursuing philosophy and theology as contradictories. Like Thomas Browne in *Religio medici* I, vi, Pomponazzi assumed that the two disciplines would sustain each other because (not although) they rely on opposite types of evidence. How conscientiously the method was applied by his disciples is shown by the correspondence of Joannes Genesius Sepulveda, *Epistolarium* V, lxxviii (*Opera omnia*, 1602, pp. 234 f.).

[4] *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 1142B: εὐβουλία. A seventeenth-century allegory of Good Counsel, published by L. Freund, *Journal of the Warburg Institute* II (1938), pp. 81 f., pl. 17a, represents a conjunction of Youth and Old Age, united under the sign of Serapis. Another version of the same idea, dating from the early sixteenth century, in the medal of Galeotto Ferreo Orsini (Hill, no. 1166), shows a sail attached to a serpent, with the motto *dumque senex puer* (fig. 69). The serpent represents Prudentia (Age), the wind-blown sail Fortuna (Youth). Hill, who reads the inscription as 'puer dumque senex', suggests that 'dumque' is a mistake for 'denique', but this produces a thought which bears no relation to the image. For the combination of *puer* and *senex* in one hieroglyph, Calcagnini used the expression *paedogeron* (*Opera*, p. 20). He first employed the term, with the explanation *id est puer senex*, in his translation of Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* (*ibid.*, p. 237), which Panofsky mistakenly describes as 'never published and apparently lost' (*Dürer* II, no. 84). It appeared under the title *De rebus Aegyptiacis* in Calcagnini's *Opera*, published by Froben in 1544, incidentally the only edition of his collected works. A manuscript is preserved in the Biblioteca Estense in Modena (MS Campori App. no. 292: *De rebus Aegyptiacis*). Admired by Erasmus for his erudition and eloquence (*Epistolae*, ed. Allen, nos. 1576, 1587, 2869), Calcagnini was a pioneer in the exploration of Plutarch's ill-preserved treatise, which Eduard Norden still regarded as 'one of the most difficult in the Greek language' (*Die Geburt des Kindes*, 1924, p. 98). Panofsky's surmise that in using the term *paedogeron*, Calcagnini was 'misunderstanding both Plutarch's grammar and meaning' whereas Pirckheimer would have been 'quite capable of

Machiavelli's parable of the lion and the fox, his advice that one quick act of cruelty propitiously applied might dispense with the wasteful cruelties of a precarious reign,[1] could neither surprise nor offend his Italian contemporaries who had learned, on the excellent authority of the Bible, to be shrewd as serpents and mild as doves.[2] Elasticity of conduct was a Renaissance ideal and, what is more, a Renaissance habit, a strategy of life sustained and sanctioned by the classical motto *festina lente*.[3] Perhaps it is not surprising that emblematic designs were invented *ad libitum* to symbolize 'slow haste' in the abstract. But was it possible to express it visibly in a human action? Could it be rendered as a pictorial scene?

'An endeavour to concentrate in a single subject those various powers, which, rising from different points, naturally move in different directions' was regarded by Sir Joshua Reynolds as unprofessional in a painter. 'Art has its boundaries, though imagination has none.' The expression of a 'mixed passion' was 'not to be attempted'.[4] But Renaissance artists rarely feared to attempt what the Eighteenth Century pronounced impossible. In a fresco designed in the style of Mantegna (fig. 44), a swift, winged-footed figure of Chance, her eyes covered by her forelock, incites a youth to grasp her quickly as she passes before him on a rolling sphere.[5] Behind the youth a steady, quiet figure

translating him correctly', assumes in both these authors a knowledge of the Teubner edition, in which this mutilated passage (363F) has been emended by an extensive interpolation. Wyttenbach's edition of 1796 (*Moralia* II, ii, p. 491) still records the corrupt διογέρων (first printed in the Aldine edition of 1509, p. 402, and now restored to δ' ὁ γέρων, with a large lacuna filled in front). It may be inferred that in Calcagnini's manuscript this bothersome compound was emended into παιδογέρων, which links up directly with the preceding words (γινόμενοι καὶ ἀπογινόμενοι, παιδογέρων). Calcagnini was probably not the inventor of this reading, since he transmitted it to his nephew without further comment (*Opera*, p. 20, cf. Giehlow, 'Die Hieroglyphenkunde des Humanismus', *op. cit.*, p. 169). As the term was believed to be Plutarch's, it is more than likely that H. Tietze and E. Tietze-Conrat were right in suggesting (*Burlington Magazine* LXX, 1937, pp. 81 f.) that Dürer's *Bearded Child* in the Louvre is a *paedogeron* or *puer senex* conceived as a hieroglyphic image. Like the triple-headed monsters in which Youth and Old Age counterbalance each other (see above, p. 45 note 1), this hoary infant would again signify *Good Counsel* or *Prudence*, that is, practical wisdom.

[1] *The Prince* xvii and xviii.

[2] In the device of the printing firm of Froben, described in the *Adagia*, s.v. *festina lente*, the Christian maxim of Matthew x, 16 is illustrated by a pagan image: a Mercury-staff (traditional symbol of *concordia*) on which a dove is perched between the serpents. See H. W. Davies, *Devices of the Early Printers* (1935), pp. 652 ff.

[3] Overconfident is Gombrich's proposition: 'No sane person believed that *festina lente* embodied a very profound truth' ('Icones Symbolicae', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XI, 1948, p. 173). Aristotle, Gellius, and Erasmus were surely sane. And a maxim which attracted the acid intelligence of Pomponazzi (not to mention the evidence of both Suetonius and Gellius that Augustus favoured it) is not likely to be either simple-minded or shallow. The dolphin combined with an anchor, incidentally, was in antiquity an emblem of Titus, not of Augustus, as Gombrich states, but this error is of good standing since it occurs, as Mlle Antoinette Huon has pointed out to me, even in Rabelais.

[4] Fifth Discourse.

[5] Unquestionably, Warburg was correct in observing (*op. cit.* I, p. 151 note) that in representing Chance not with a flying forelock but with a forelock that covers her face (*crine tegis faciem*), and with wings attached to her feet (*talaria habes*), the painter remembered Ausonius's description of an *Occasio*, supposedly by Phidias, in *Epigrammata* 33. Although the painting has repeatedly occupied iconographers of Fortuna (e.g. Schubring, *Cassoni*, p. 79; Van Marle, *Iconographie de l'art profane* II, 1932, p. 185; A. Doren, 'Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance', *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* II, i, 1924, p. 136 note; Wittkower, 'Chance, Time and

of Wisdom restrains his eager steps. She stands on a solid block: 'for as the ancients depicted Chance on a round stone, so they placed Wisdom on a square one.'[1] But while the contrast between the firm socle and the mobile sphere is as unmistakable as between the characters of the women themselves, it is surely wrong, in the presence of these contrarious tutors of youth, to interpret 'the relation of these two forces as an irreconcilable feud'.[2] The youth, while placed under the protection of restraining Virtue, who significantly touches his breast, is quite intent in his pursuit of outward Chance, and the swift goddess is not unfriendly to him: for she keeps her forelock turned in his direction,[3] admonishing him as much toward speed as the attending Virtue does toward firmness. His action, at once eager and steady, is a perfect embodiment of *festina lente*; he hastes slowly.

The woodcuts of the *Hypnerotomachia* alone show more than eighty variations of *festina lente*, each one of them giving a new twist to the theme. Some of the designs are frankly comical, like the image of elephants turning into ants, and of ants into elephants, which demonstrates, on the authority of Sallust X, vi, a *discordia concors* between maximum and minimum.[4] Others are solemn, for example the obelisk of three facets, which bears triadic images and inscriptions relating the Holy Trinity to the three parts of Time.[5] Still others are puzzles for the eye: there is the half-seated, half-rising figure of a girl who has placed one foot firmly on the ground while lifting the other high in the air (fig. 45). On the side of the stationary foot she holds a pair of wings, on the side of the lifted foot a tortoise. The inscription informs us that she rises on the side of the tortoise to counteract its slowness, and at the same time remains seated on the side of the wings to offset their speed. And we are invited to do the same: 'Velocitatem sedendo, tarditatem tempera surgendo.'[6] The union of contraries is here

Virtue', *Journal of the Warburg Institute* I, 1938, p. 318), the subject of the picture as a whole has been either left unexplained or misunderstood. Paul Kristeller, *Mantegna* (1901), p. 457, ascribes the execution of the badly retouched fresco to Antonio da Pavia (?), but the invention may surely be regarded as Mantegna's.

[1] Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, fol. 290^{r}, 'De quadrato'. For the juxtaposition of Chance and Wisdom, with sphere and cube as their respective seats, see frontispiece of Bovillus, *Liber de sapiente*, 1510-11, reproduced in E. Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (1927), pl. II. Virtue in general, rather than Wisdom specifically, is characterized in Gyraldus, *Opera* I, 27, by a matronly aspect and a cubic pedestal: 'Sed enim Virtutem variis imaginibus conformatam ab antiquis fuisse advertimus: nunc enim *matronali habitu* honesto inaffectatoque, nunc *quadrato saxo* insistentem' (italics mine). A winged globe attached to a firm cube, with the inscription *virtute duce, comite fortuna* (from Cicero, *Ad familiares* X, iii) appears in the device of the printer Stephan Gryphius in Lyon.

[2] Wittkower, *loc. cit.*

[3] An unusually considerate action in a figure of Chance, for as Bacon observed, 'Occasion, as it is in the common verse, turneth a bald noddle, after she hath presented her locks in front, and no hold taken' (*Essays* xxi: 'Of Delays'). The common verse paraphrased by Bacon is *Catonis disticha* II, 26: 'Fronte capillata, post est occasio calva'.

[4] *Hypnerotomachia*, fol. p vi^{v}, fully explained in Valeriano, *op. cit.*, fol. 19^{r}: 'Concordiae discordiaeque effectus'. I hope to present the complete philosophical argument of the *Hypnerotomachia* in a separate study.

[5] *Hypnerotomachia*, fol. h v.

[6] *Ibid.*, fol. h vii^{v}.

ciphered through an extravagant contrapost, whose very absurdity makes the image memorable. Through such ciphers, which entertain while they instruct, the hero of the *Hypnerotomachia* is cautiously and temptingly guided toward the more hidden arcana, learning on his way to combine prudence with daring. The plan of the novel, so often quoted and so little read, is to 'initiate' the soul into its own secret destiny—the final union of Love and Death, for which *Hypneros* (the sleeping *Eros funéraire*) served as a poetic image. The way leads through a series of bitter-sweet progressions in which the very first steps already foreshadow the ultimate mystery of *Adonia*, which is the sacred marriage of Pleasure and Pain.

One of the symbols for patience in the *Hypnerotomachia*—a bucranium or ox-skull (fig. 46)[1]—recurs in a painting of Amor attributed to Titian, in which Love sets the wheel of Chance into motion (fig. 48). Love, thus put between the symbols of Chance and Patience, is himself engaged in 'hasting slowly', and so lives up to his Platonic character—the son of painful Want and resourceful Affluence. 'He is always poor . . . and like his mother he is always in distress. Like his father too . . . he is always plotting . . . bold, enterprising, strong, a mighty hunter, always weaving some intrigue or other, . . . terrible as an enchanter, sorcerer, sophist. . . . But that which is always flowing in is always flowing out, and so he is never in want and never in wealth.'[2] A perfect portrait of that desperate dialectician appears in an Italianate drawing of the sixteenth century ascribed to a German draughtsman (fig. 47). It shows the figure of an equilibristic Amor who has appropriated the sail and sphere of Fortuna.[3] Propelled by the force of his own breath which he blows into the sail, he throws the weight of his body in the opposite direction, stemming his feet against the sphere that carries him forward. The demon driving the precarious engine is both its motor and its brake.

These contraries such unity do hold
Only to flatter fools and make them bold.

On the face of it, it would not seem unreasonable to cite Plato in support of a cunning folly, since his dialogues are filled with such contrarious characters. The philosopher who is both ignorant and knowing, the lover who is both wealthy and poor, the guardian who is both fierce and friendly (*Republic* 375), all would seem to exhibit a union of contraries. Yet Plato always criticized, in the *Republic* (436) as well

[1] *Ibid.*, fol. d vii[r]. [2] *Symposium* 203.

[3] E. Schilling, *Altdeutsche Meisterzeichnungen* (1937), no. 25: 'Zeichnungsweise eines deutschen Künstlers, der in Italien Wurzel geschlagen hat'. Attributed to Peter Vischer the Younger by E. Bock, *Die Zeichnungen in der Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen* (1929), no. 224. For the fusion of Amor and Fortuna see Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, fol. 288[v]. 'Id vero minime praetereundum, Aegyrenses eiusdem mutabilitatis ergo Amorem atque Fortunam eodem in delubro venerari consuevisse.' Also *ibid.*, fol. 410[r]. The source is Pausanias VII, xxvi, 8.

as in the *Symposium* (187), the Heraclitean theory that opposites coincide; he regarded it as a verbal confusion. 'The way up' and 'the way down' may lead to the same point, but that does not make 'up' and 'down' identical. Laughter and tears, pleasure and pain, motion and rest, harmony and discord may become interfused in our experience, but this does not abolish the difference between them. In the 'royal craft of weaving', by which Plato illustrated the art of statesmanship, the fierce nature of man should form the warp while his pliant nature serves as the woof: 'These, which are naturally opposed, she seeks to bind and weave together' (*Statesman* 309), but that very attempt is based on the assumption that warp and woof are not the same. How to breed in man a dog-like capacity for being aggressive as well as friendly, remained among the most formidable problems of an ideal republic; for it was not in the common nature of things to produce it, and when it did occur, it was something of a miracle, not unlike the philosopher-king, whose wisdom would not be clouded by his power.

A clear distinction between a conjunction and a coincidence of opposites was therefore one of Plato's basic postulates. While he favoured the development of opposite faculties in one person and in one state, and studied in the *Philebus* the ideal mixture of opposite principles in the *summum bonum*, he never did concede their coincidence anywhere, not even in the *Parmenides*, where the opposites are shown logically to entail each other. In that final and radical phase of Plato's dialectic, the One and the Many, Equality and Difference, still apply to the same things only in different respects, and so their own difference does not vanish, because they continue to move each other back and forth in a relentless course of irritation. In contradistinction to some of the Neoplatonists, Plato did not allow the movement to come to rest in a theological *possest*[1] or a mathematical infinite—an infinite in which Cusanus was to demonstrate that the circle and the straight line become identical. For Plato the infinite remained the imperfect, a source of immeasurable confusion, against which the dialectic was designed as a cure. A theory which would let the dialectic be re-absorbed or halted by a coincidence of opposites, no matter whether defined as 'mature' or 'transcendent', would be, in Plato's terms, an admission of defeat.

But for Ficino, to whom the mysteries of Plato were revealed through Plotinus, Proclus, and Dionysius, the difference between a conjunction and a coincidence of opposites was merely one of degree. He was confident that 'our Plato in the *Parmenides* equally affirms and negates all possible opposites concerning the ultimate One',[2] and

[1] A barbarism invented by Cusanus to indicate the coincidence of act and power in God. In any finite being, he explains in *De possest*, potentiality (= *posse*) and actuality (= *est*) are distinct; but in God the potential is always realized because infinite power *is* infinite act. (One is reminded of Verlaine's *bealtitudo*.)

[2] *Opera*, pp. 1017 f.

he attributed to Plato himself the opinion, of which there is no trace in Plato's text, that 'the Infinite and the End, which oppose each other when applied to particulars, are outside of particulars simply one and the same': *Infinitum igitur atque finis quae sunt in rebus opposita, extra res sunt ipsum simpliciter unum.*[1] On this theory of the 'infinite end', which is also to be regarded as the source of all being, the many conjunctions of opposites which Plato had favoured, could be understood as emanations from their coincidence in the supreme One. Hence any practical believer in Augustan 'ripeness' could be hailed as a Platonic initiate; Ficino would greet him as *Complatonicus*. And if Augustus's motto *festina lente* seemed the perfect verbal expression of this balanced-unbalanced philosophy, no visual image could be more pertinent to it than the combination of crab and butterfly on Augustus's coins:[2] the volatile animal joined to the crawling, the airiest to the most heavily armed. An excellent travesty of this inexhaustible subject is to be found in *Love's Labour's Lost* (III, 1), where a dialogue between Armado and Moth, introduced by the phrase 'Bring him festinately hither', ends as follows:

Moth: As swift as lead, sir.
Armado: Thy meaning, pretty ingenious? Is not lead a metal heavy, dull, and slow?
Moth: *Minime*, honest master; or rather, master, no.
Armado: I say, lead is slow.
Moth: You are too swift, sir, to say so. Is that lead slow which is fir'd from a gun?
Armado: Sweet smoke of rhetoric! He reputes me a cannon. . . .

* * * * *

The cannon-ball which so aptly exploded at the climax of Shakespeare's quip, was not a new conceit for *festina lente*; it was conventional, and that increased the satirical force of the image. In all earnestness, the duke of Ferrara, Alfonso d'Este, like Federigo da Montefeltre before him, had used a bomb-shell as a heroic emblem,[3] a symbol of concealed power propitiously released: A LIEU ET TEMPS. In Symeone's *Sententiose imprese*, a book not unlike Bruno's *Eroici furori*, the picture of the exploding 'ball of fire' (fig. 61) is accompanied by moral verses which are about as pleasing as the sentiment they express:

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 1175, *In Parmenidem*. On Ficino's reading of the *Parmenides*, see R. Klibansky, 'Plato's Parmenides in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance' *op. cit.*, pp. 312–25.

[2] Mattingly, *op. cit.* I, p. 11, no. 60. Reproduced as Augustus's emblem in Gabriel Symeone, *Le sententiose imprese* (1560), p. 11, inscribed *festina lente*. A recent article by Deonna, 'The Crab and the Butterfly', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XVII (1954), pp. 47–86, collects ancient prototypes and parallels to the coin of Augustus but is less rewarding for Renaissance iconography because, although citing significant examples, it does not penetrate to the Renaissance ideal of *maturitas*, nor to the source of the term in Gellius.

[3] Hill, no. 232. On Federigo da Montefeltre, see above, p. 88.

Come palla, in cui chiuso a tempo è foco
Per ingannar d'altrui l'incauta mente,
Tal l'huom si mostra all'hor saggio e prudente,
Ch'offende il suo nimico a tempo e loco.[1]

The praise of this engine of destruction as a model of heroic prudence (*saggio e prudente*) contrasts with the sanity and courage of Ariosto who, although employed by these masters of artillery, did not fail to contradict their flatterers. In clear allusion to the cannon foundry of Alfonso d'Este, he foretold in *L'Orlando furioso* that the 'murderous engine' would destroy the virtues of chivalry. Orlando throws it to the bottom of the sea (IX, 88–91; also XI, 21–8). But however self-evident in retrospect, the idea that mechanical warfare must spell the end of the chivalrous tradition was blandly discounted by the Platonic emblem writers. Their books of heroic devices, so rich in moral marvels and myths, are interspersed with pictures of mechanical inventions, admirable machines which harness the secret forces of nature in order to release them for a dramatic effect. Placed next to the classical columns and sirens, diamonds and laurels, salamanders, porcupines and unicorns—symbols which continue to convey their heroic lesson in the language of fable—the new waterwheels, bellows, catapults, rockets, bombards, and barbacanes seem like brutally prosaic intruders, realistic contrivances in a setting of fantasy. But to the inventors themselves—Leonardo da Vinci among them—they exemplified the magical forces of nature, forces which man carries also in his own breast. Nature is man writ large; hence, if forces in nature produce miraculous effects when they are harnessed, collected, and propitiously released, they can set an example to the forces in man. In Bocchi's moral *Symbola*, the ancient observation quoted by Cusanus, that minimal spaces may conceal maximal forces, that the energy of a small spark is potentially that of a great fire,[2] was illustrated—in the midst of Socratic images of Silenus, Minerva, Hercules, and Venus—by a picture of the invention of gunpowder: 'Haec pulveris inventio bombardici':

. . . sic ignem saepe favilla,
Ut minima, maximum facit.[3]

But in denouncing gunpowder as destructive of chivalry, Ariosto was old-fashioned. His view entailed a separation of mechanical from liberal arts; he distrusted their revolutionary fusion which the advanced spirits inclined to favour. He feared that if barbacanes, catapults, and bombards were freely admitted into the company of the muses, the mechanical arts would displace the liberal; the muses would be silenced by the

[1] Symeone, *op. cit.*, p. 68. [2] See below, p. 179. [3] *Symbolicae quaestiones*, no. CXIV.

engines. But the new Orlandos did not think of throwing their firearms into the sea. They embroidered them on their waistcoats. Alfonso wore a flaming bomb on his cuirass; his medals portray him in that chivalrous outfit (fig. 60). And in Titian's painting he places his hand, a fine and beautiful courtly hand, with possessive elegance on a cannon, not only the proud symbol of an artillery expert and manufacturer, but his emblem of statecraft, of prudent *virtù* (fig. 62). In the opinion of the emperor Charles V, the duke of Ferrara was outstanding among Italian princes for his skill in civic administration and diplomacy, to which he knew how to apply a tactic of propitious explosion, patiently accumulating the forces which he would unexpectedly release. 'Sweet smoke of rhetoric! He reputes me a cannon.' It is essential to the stylishness of Titian's portrait that the duke, while touching the cannon as his emblem, is dressed in civilian attire, with a courtier's sword on his hip (a *finesse* abandoned in some of the copies). Conceived as a personal attribute, the cannon signifies a princely virtue not confined to military strategy, a combination of force and prudence.

These mechanistic models for a moral virtue, which distantly resemble Cusanus's beryl, his *ludus globi*, his 'all-seeing' icon, or his 'experiments with the scales',[1] belong to a phase of Renaissance imagination which was classed as *magia naturalis*. Distinct from necromancy by its enlightened methods of inquiry, natural magic was a part of natural philosophy, according to Pico even its consummation, because it was natural philosophy in action.[2] Pico defined this discipline as 'a science concerned with the virtues and actions of natural forces and their effect on each other and on their natural dependents, and by which is known what natural forces can achieve by their own virtue, and what not.'[3] But despite his cautious definition, which he offered in the *Apologia*, Pico ascribed an enormous range to natural magic. 'There is no latent force in heaven or earth which the magician cannot release by proper inducements.'[4] In reflecting on the foundations of this titanic science, Pico explained that man is the vital link between the skill of magic and the works of nature: 'What the human magician produces through art, nature produces naturally by producing man.'[5] And that explains why magic is a moral force: it makes man recognize in himself the forces of nature, and in nature the model of his own force. And by properly inserting his magic art into nature, he can release forces that are greater than his own.

Pico regarded that power as purely beneficial. Natural magic, 'in calling forth into the light as if from their hiding-places the powers scattered and sown in the world by the loving-kindness of God, does not so much work wonders as diligently serve a

[1] See below, pp. 179 f., 183.
[2] *Conclusiones magicae*, nos. 3 and 4.
[3] *Apologia* (*Opera*, p. 168).
[4] *Conclusiones magicae*, no. 5.
[5] 'Quod magus homo facit per artem, facit natura naturaliter faciendo hominem', *ibid.*, no. 10.

wonder-working nature.'[1] By 'applying to each single thing the suitable and peculiar inducements (which are called the ἴυγγες of the magicians)', natural magic 'brings forth into the open the miracles concealed in the recesses of the world, in the depths of nature . . . ; and as the farmer weds elms to vines, even so does the *magus* wed earth to heaven. . . .'[2]

His disdain of necromancy notwithstanding, this is the mood in which Leonardo da Vinci explored the secret recesses of nature, releasing and harnessing its concealed forces by 'suitable and peculiar inducements'. The episodic method of his experimentation, so baffling to modern scientists because of its unconsecutive, conjectural style,[3] is a pursuit of elective affinities that are of magical power—inconspicuous causes that produce amazing effects. Disinterested science, discovery for its own sake, lay outside of Leonardo's ambition. His spirit of inquiry was spectacular like a magician's; and hence his diction tended toward oratory, even his arguments aimed for effect. One wonders whether that famous and mysterious sentence, 'la natura è piena d'infinite ragioni che non furono mai in esperienza',[4] means anything more than this: Nature is full of latent causes which have never been released.

As for Pico, it is remarkable that in describing the magician's art as a 'marriage of heaven and earth', he drew his simile from Virgil's *Georgics* I, 2: the farmer's skill in wedding elms to vines, *ulmisque adiungere vites*.[5] The quotation vividly points to the fact, too easily overlooked, that 'natural magic' extends its method to the study of organic marvels. The sympathetic skill of 'applying to each single thing the suitable and peculiar inducements' achieves its 'maturest' triumph in the art of planting and husbandry. For it is here, in the exploration of growth, rather than of mechanical cataclysms, that 'ripeness' returns to its poetic homeland and supplies truly 'natural' models for *festina lente*. Lodovico il Moro's device of the mulberry-tree might be taken for a purely verbal allusion to his person; for the Latin name for the tree was *morus*, the Italian *moro celso*. But in Pliny the mulberry was described as 'the wisest of trees'—*morus . . . sapientissima arborum*—because it develops its bloom very slowly, but then matures so fast that it bursts forth with dramatic vigour: 'Sed cum coepit, intantum universa germinatio erumpit, ut una nocte peragat etiam cum strepitu.'[6] An ideal of statecraft

[1] '. . . non tam facit miranda quam facienti naturae sedula famulatur', *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, p. 152; tr. E. L. Forbes.

[2] *Ibid.*: '. . . et sicut agricola ulmos vitibus, ita magus terram coelo . . . maritat.'

[3] Cf. Leonardo Olschki, *Geschichte der neusprachlichen wissenschaftlichen Literatur* I (1919), pp. 346–413.

[4] Institut de France MS J. fol. 18r; J. P. Richter, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci* (1939), no. 1151.

[5] Also *Georgics* II, 221. The image recurs, beautifully expanded, at the conclusion of Politian's *Manto* ('. . . amicitur vitibus ulmus. . . . / O vatum preciosa quies, o gaudia solis / Nota piis, dulcis furor, incorrupta voluptas'). Further sources listed in Ripa, *Iconologia*, s.v. 'Benevolenza'.

[6] Pliny, *Natural History* XVI, xxv. Applied by

attached to a name (Morus)[1] was thus illustrated by the natural wisdom of a plant—'symbol, in its long delay and sudden yielding of flowers and fruit together, of a wisdom which economizes all forces for an opportunity of sudden and sure effect'. The description is Walter Pater's.[2] Inadvertently it recalls the moral of the cannon-ball, but translated into the language of the tenuous alliance between dialectics and pastoral poetry.

Ripa to *Diligenza*: 'Così sapientissimo sarà riputato colui che unirà la prestezza con la tardanza, trà le quali consiste la diligenza', a slightly lopsided rendering of Gellius X, xi: 'ut ad rem agendam simul adhiberetur et industriae celeritas et diligentiae tarditas.'

[1] Paolo Giovio, *Elogia virorum bellica virtute illustrium* (Basle 1596) IV, p. 128: 'Ludovicus Sfortia'.

[2] *The Renaissance*: 'Leonardo da Vinci'.

CHAPTER VII

BOTTICELLI'S PRIMAVERA

e segue l'occhio ove l'orecchio tira
per veder tal dolcezza d'onde è nata.
—Lorenzo de' Medici, *L'altercazione*

For some time there has been among historians of art a remarkable unanimity about the literary sources relevant to Botticelli's *Primavera* and *The Birth of Venus*. As both pictures are known to have come from the villa of Castello, a property of the younger branch of the Medici, it is practically certain that they were painted for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco, who was brought up under the guardianship of his cousin Lorenzo the Magnificent.[1] There is documentary evidence that he was a pupil of Politian and Ficino,[2] and that he became a patron of Botticelli.[3] The constellation Ficino-Politian-Botticelli should therefore be amply sufficient to explain these pictures. But strange to say, only the component deriving from Politian has been established with complete success.[4] Botticelli's poetical trappings are unmistakably indebted to Politian's muse and to those ancient poems (particularly the Homeric Hymns, Horace's Odes, and Ovid's *Fasti*) with which Politian and Ficino had made him conversant;[5] but in none of these cases do the parallels extend beyond single traits or

[1] On Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco as the patron of these paintings, see H. P. Horne, *Botticelli* (1908), pp. 49 ff., 184 ff.; J. Mesnil, *Botticelli* (1938), p. 198 note 46, with reservations; C. Gamba, *Botticelli*, tr. Chuzeville (n.d.), pp. 135, 160; N. A. Robb, *Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance* (1935), p. 217 (where 'uncle' should read 'second cousin'); Gombrich, 'Botticelli's Mythologies: a Study in the Neoplatonic Symbolism of his Circle', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* VIII (1945), pp. 7–60, with particular emphasis on Ficino's *Epistolarium*.

[2] Cf. Politian's *Silvae* (dedication of *Manto*), *Opera*, fol. 84[r]; Ficino's *Epistolarium*, *Opera*, pp. 834 f., 843 f.

[3] It was for him that Botticelli made the famous illustrations to Dante; see Mesnil, *op. cit.*, p. 122. On other employments of Botticelli by the same Lorenzo *ibid.*, pp. 151, 210 notes 152 f.

[4] Warburg, *Sandro Botticellis 'Geburt der Venus' und 'Frühling'* (1893), reprinted in *Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike* pp. 1–57, with additions pp. 307–328.

[5] Politian, carrying imitation to the point of virtuosity, composed in Ovid's manner a versified commentary on the *Fasti*, presumably intended as one of the *Silvae* but not preserved. It is mentioned in a letter from Michael Verinus to Piero de' Medici (F. O. Mencken, *Historia vitae Angeli Politiani*, 1736, p. 609; Warburg, *op. cit.*, p. 34 note 3), a document showing the high estimation of the *Fasti* in fifteenth-century Florence: 'qui est illius divini vatis liber pulcherrimus'.

episodes. They establish a connexion of mood and taste, and a community of literary interests, but they do not explain the programme of the paintings. The *Primavera* in particular has remained a riddle.[1] If I dare to propose a solution here, it is because the presence of the three Graces (fig. 23) may offer a clue to the programme of the picture as a whole (fig. 22). When Pico wrote that 'the unity of Venus is unfolded in the trinity of the Graces', he added that the same form of dialectic pervades the entire universe of pagan myth.[2] It is legitimate, therefore, to inquire how the triad of figures on the right of the painting, which derive from a passage in Ovid, is related to the formal triad of the Graces on the left, and whether these two contrasting groups, being placed on either side of Venus, perhaps represent two consecutive phases of one coherent theory of love.

* * * * *

The scene on the right is not quite easy to decipher (fig. 29). Here Zephyr, the wind of spring, swiftly pursues, as in Ovid's *Fasti*, the innocent earth-nymph Chloris.[3] With blowing cheeks he rushes forth from behind a tree which bends under his impact. Chloris tries to escape his embrace, but as Zephyr touches her, flowers come out of her breath, and she is transformed into Flora, the resplendent herald of spring. *Chloris eram quae Flora vocor*: 'I once was Chloris who am now called Flora.'

In the *Fasti*, the transformation was introduced as a playful piece of etymology. The poet supposed that the Greek name Chloris which belonged to a simple-minded nymph of the fields (*nympha campi felicis*), had changed into the Roman name of the goddess Flora. But when we see how Chloris, at the touch of the spring breeze, produces flowers from her breath (*vernas efflat ab ore rosas*), how her hands reach behind the flowers that decorate the garment of the new Flora,[4] and how the two figures

[1] That the picture belongs to the context of Florentine Neoplatonism has been suspected by Warburg and many others, and recently reaffirmed, with particular reference to Ficino, by Gombrich in the article cited p. 100 note 1. Unfortunately, the arguments he has found in Ficino (not to mention Apuleius) lead all around the programme of the picture but not to its centre, perhaps because the arguments have lost their original focus. In dealing with philosophical propositions, enumeration is not a substitute for analysis. The triads loosely listed by Gombrich and regarded by him as unconnected (p. 36: 'our difficulty is obviously not that we do not know any meaning but that we know too many') derive, without exception, from a basic Neoplatonic principle (*emanatio-raptio-remeatio*) which is absent from his article. The resulting aggregate of Neoplatonic quotations, unrelated to their formative principle, amounts to an error of description, like mistaking a vertebrate for a jelly-fish. In part this confusion may have been caused by a superficial flabbiness in Ficino's style. As Festugière remarked, '. . . il y a bien du fatras dans les Commentaires de Marsile' (*Studia Mirandulana*, p. 162): for although Ficino can be quite succinct in formulating a principle, he reveals, in the expansion of detail, the diversionary habits of a vast compiler and talker. The problems posed by this peculiarity have been admirably stated by Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, pp. 6 f. ('Methodological Questions').

[2] See above, p. 39.

[3] *Fasti* V, 193–214. Cf. Warburg, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[4] In Chloris' right hand some of these flowers appear between thumb and forefinger; and also her open left hand has the tip of the third finger overlapped by the end of a twig or leaf, which might be mistaken for a slip of the brush, did not the other hand show the same motif.

converge in their rapid motion so that they would seem to collide, we can hardly doubt that the metamorphosis was represented by Botticelli as a change of nature. The awkwardness of the shy and primitive creature, caught against her will by the 'gale of passion', is transformed into the swift poise of victorious Beauty. 'Till then', according to the *Fasti*, 'the earth had been but of one colour.'

In Ovid, Chloris herself confesses that when Zephyr first saw her, she was so unadorned that she hardly dared, after her transformation, to think back to her original state:

Quae fuerit mihi forma, grave est narrare modestae.

But with becoming humour she concedes that it was the bareness of her form which secured for her a proper husband (literally, 'a son-in-law for my mother'), who gave her the realm of flowers as a bridal gift.[1]

. . . questa novella Flora
fa germinar la terra e mandar fora
mille vari color di fior novelli.[2]

The interpretation here offered combines two traditional views which have been regarded as incompatible: first, that the figure strewing flowers is Flora, which it seems difficult to deny; secondly, that the nymph pursued by Zephyr is Ovid's Chloris, whom Ovid himself identified with Flora, as did also Politian.[3] But the contradiction vanishes if the scene is recognized as a metamorphosis in Ovid's style, suggested by Ovid's own phrase: 'Chloris eram quae Flora vocor.' That the flowers issuing from the mouth of Chloris fall on to Flora's garment and into her lap, has always been noticed; but the spatial relation between the two figures, which is so ambiguous as to verge on confusion, has been accepted as an oddity of style rather than a calculated effect. And yet the scene has reminded more than one observer of the pursuit and transformation of Daphne.[4]

As for Vasari's recollection that the picture 'signifies spring' (*dinotando la primavera*), this does not imply, as has been occasionally supposed, a separate personification of Primavera herself. In the poems of Lorenzo de' Medici, spring is the season 'when Flora adorns the world with flowers'—*la primavera quando Flora di fiori adorna il mondo.*[5] This passage alone would speak against the suggestion that the figure strewing flowers needs to be renamed Primavera. She is Flora, whose advent is a sign of spring. Flowers burst forth when the cold earth is transformed by the touch of Zephyr.

[1] *Fasti* V, 200, 212.
[2] Lorenzo de' Medici, *Comento sopra alcuni de' suoi sonetti*, in *Opere* I (ed. A. Simioni, 1939), p. 117.
[3] *Giostra* I, 68.
[4] Warburg, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
[5] *Comento*, *ed. cit.*, p. 122.

In the guise of an Ovidian fable, the progression Zephyr-Chloris-Flora spells out the familiar dialectic of love: Pulchritudo arises from a *discordia concors* between Castitas and Amor; the fleeing nymph and the amorous Zephyr unite in the beauty of Flora. But this episode, *dinotando la primavera*, is only the initial phase in the Metamorphoses of Love that unfold in the garden of Venus.

* * * * *

Despite her modesty and restraint, Venus was recognized by Vasari in the central figure of the painting. Above her is a passionate, blindfolded Cupid, whose impetuous action supports by contrast the deliberate gesture of her hand. Although ostensibly blind, the energetic little god appears to be a most accurate marksman (fig. 24). He directs his flaming arrow with absolute sureness at the central dancer among the Graces[1] who is characterized as Castitas.

To distinguish her from her sisters, the central Grace is unadorned, her garments fall in simple folds, and her hair is carefully bound together (fig. 26). The sadness of her face, a shy and wistful melancholy, contrasts with the wilful expression of her left neighbour who steps forth against her with a kind of determined passion (fig. 23). The unruly nature of this opponent is apparent through her attire as a Grace. A flamboyant coiffure (fig. 25), which surrounds the head in snake-like tresses and allows flaming curls to play in the wind, a gorgeous brooch on a heaving chest, and bulging curves in body and garment, convey a sense of overflow and abundance and of a voluptuous energy.

The third Grace (fig. 27) is the most comely of the group and exhibits her beauty with a judicious pride. She wears a jewel of moderate size, sustained by a braid of hair. Her locks, set off by a veil which is surmounted by an ornament of pearls, produce an effect both more varied and more composed, and hence of a considerably greater splendour, than either the loose tresses or the tight coiffure that characterize her companions. The Latinized names of the three Graces—*Viriditas, Splendor, Laetitia Uberrima*, which signify Juvenescence, Splendour, and Abundant Pleasure—may have suggested some of the traits and ornaments which amplified the abstract triad of Castitas-Pulchritudo-Voluptas.[2]

[1] He is clearly *not* shooting at Mercury, although it has occasionally been claimed. The old-fashioned description of the picture in F. von Reber and A. Bayersdorfer, *Klassischer Bilderschatz* I (1889), p. x, no. 140, is correct, as we shall see, in every detail: 'In the centre Venus; above her, Amor shooting burning arrows toward the Graces who dance on the left. Next to these, Mercury dispelling with his caduceus the fogs in the treetops. On the right, Flora walks forward, strewing roses, while flowers issue from the mouth of the fleeing earth-nymph as she is touched by Zephyr.' Quoted by Warburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 f.

[2] For the names of the three Graces, see *Orphic Hymns* LX, 3 (= Hesiod, *Theogony* 907; Pausanias IX, xxxv, 5; Plutarch, *Moralia* 778E); for their Latin translation Ficino, *De amore* V, ii.

That the Graces are not represented naked, but wearing loose, transparent garments, shows how much the painter was inspired by literature: for they are thus described in Horace and Seneca: 'solutis itaque tunicis utuntur; perlucidis autem . . .',[1] 'solutaque ac perlucida veste',[2] 'et solutis Gratiae zonis'.[3] Also the exquisite maze in which they interlace their gestures was surely meant to recall Horace's 'knot of the Graces':

segnesque nodum solvere Gratiae.[4]

Even the incidental solecism that the two lateral Graces are facing inward, in contradistinction to the classical group, is supported by a literary variant: '. . . unam aversam, reliquas duas se invicem contueri'.[5] Above all, the choreography of the dance seems to follow Seneca's rule: 'Ille consertis manibus in se redeuntium chorus.'

But however diversified the literary sources which may have supplied this or that descriptive detail, the sense of the action is only strengthened by these elegant poetical fixtures. While 'juvenescent' Castitas and 'abundant' Voluptas step forth against each other, Pulchritudo in her 'splendour' stands firm and poised, siding with Castitas whose hand she clasps, and at the same time joining Voluptas in a florid gesture. In so far as dialectic can be danced, it has been accomplished in this group. 'Opposition', 'concord', and 'concord in opposition', all three are expressed in the postures and steps and in the articulate style of joining the hands. Placed palm against palm to suggest an encounter, but quietly interlocked in the absence of conflict, they rise up high to form a significant knot when they illustrate the Beauty of Passion.

That this gesture is made to hover like a crown above the head of Castitas, defines the theme of the dance as her initiation. Castitas is the neophyte, initiated into Love by the ministrations of Voluptas and Pulchritudo. Protected by Venus and assailed by Cupid, she adopts some of the traits which she resists. Her garment has fallen from her left shoulder, this being the side on which she is joined by Voluptas; and in deference to Pulchritudo (on her right) a rich, flowing tress escapes from the knot of her hair. Yet as she acts the part of the 'raptured' Grace who unites the opposites in her person, the whole dance becomes imbued with her own spirit of chastity which she imparts to her two companions. In this she appears to have the sanction of Venus; for however recklessly Cupid may shoot his fire, Venus tempers the dance and keeps its movements within a melodious restraint.

The idea of Venus as a goddess of moderation may seem mythologically odd. Yet when Pico della Mirandola defined her as the source of *debiti temperamenti* and called her the goddess of concord and harmony, he followed Plutarch almost to the letter.[6]

[1] *De beneficiis* I, iii, 5.
[2] *Ibid.* I, iii, 2.
[3] Horace, *Carmina* I, xxx.
[4] *Ibid.* III, xxi.
[5] Gyraldus, *Opera* II, 731.
[6] See above, pp. 82 ff.

The concept of a beneficent, peaceable, guarded Venus was one of the more refreshing paradoxes of Neoplatonism. In Plotinus's *De amore*,[1] which was translated and explained by Marsilio Ficino, the contrast between her placid nature and the restiveness of her son was brought out in a definition which seems to explain their divergent roles in Botticelli's picture: 'If the soul is the mother of Love [εἴπερ ψυχὴ μήτηρ Ἔρωτος], then Venus is identical with the soul, and Amor is the soul's energy [ἐνέργεια ψυχῆς].'[2] In this view, Venus holds the powers of love in abeyance, while they are released by the wantonness of Amor. And it follows that the precious choreography of the Graces is both sustained and moved by these contending forces, the two gods conveying to the triadic dance their proportionate characters of passion and restraint:

. . . and where you go,
So interweave the curious knot,
As ev'n the observer scarce may know
Which lines are Pleasure's, and which not. . . .

Then as all actions of mankind
Are but a labyrinth or maze:
So let your dances be entwined,
Yet not perplex men unto gaze:

But measured, and so numerous too,
As men may read each act they do;
And when they see the graces meet
Admire the wisdom of your feet.[3]

In contrast to the pursuit and transformation of Chloris, the dance of the Graces is in a decorous style: *iunctaeque nymphis Gratiae decentes.*[4] There is no trace of that forthright vitality which animated Chloris and Zephyr, and which gave to the face of the transfigured Flora the sturdy air of a country bride (fig. 28). The 'harmony in discord' is now a studied knot, a balanced symmetry between three sisters. In the argument of the painting, this elevation of mood is combined with an elevation of meaning. When Passion (in the character of Zephyr) transforms fleeing Chastity (Chloris) into Beauty (Flora), the progression represents what Ficino called a 'productive triad' (*trinitas productoria*).[5] Hence the group appears in a forward, descending movement, issuing into the figure of Flora who firmly and jubilantly treads the earth. But when the

[1] *Enneads* III, v, 4.

[2] In Ficino's translation, 'siquidem anima est mater Amoris, Venus autem est anima, Amor vero est actus animae. . . .' Also *Enneads* VI, ix, 9: καὶ ἔστι πᾶσα ψυχὴ Ἀφροδίτη (Ficino: *est autem omnis anima Venus*).

[3] Ben Jonson, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue.*

[4] Horace, *Carmina* I, iv.

[5] *Opera*, pp. 1559 ff.

Graces resume and develop the theme, they reverse the sequence as in a musical palindrome: Castitas, taking Pulchritudo as her term of departure, moves toward an encounter with Voluptas, and the resulting group is a 'converting triad' (*trinitas conversoria sive ad supera reductoria*) in which Castitas, as the central figure, turns her back to the world and faces the Beyond. Her glance is in the direction of Mercury who has turned away from the scene and plays with clouds. For it has been repeatedly and justly observed that the objects which Mercury touches with his staff, are not golden apples in the trees, but a band of clouds that have collected there.[1]

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The crux of any interpretation of the *Primavera* is to explain the part played by Mercury. By tradition he is 'the leader of the Graces';[2] but while that would seem to explain his placement next to them, it is hard to reconcile with his disengaged —not to say, indifferent—attitude. Mercury is also the 'guide of souls' (*Psychopompos*) whom he conducts to the Beyond; but although he is here represented as nostalgic and bears on his cloak a symbol suggestive of death (inverted flames),[3] there is nothing funereal about this youth who seems too relaxed, in his quiet contrapost, to suggest a ghost-like journey. His detachment and poise also seem to contradict an important passage in Virgil which might otherwise explain his action. 'With his staff', we read in the *Aeneid*, 'he drives the winds and skims the turbid clouds':

> *Illa [scil. virga] fretus agit ventos et turbida tranat*
> *Nubila.*[4]

[1] Writers on the *Primavera* who have read of these clouds in other writers, have occasionally questioned their existence; but they are clearly visible in the original, at least in its present condition and light (1951), as is also the top of Mercury's staff entwined with serpents. The outfit of the god, however unclassical in appearance, is mythographically irreproachable. The high boots with wings rising from the heel like spurs, are typical of a Quattrocento Mercury (cf. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving* IV, pl. 361, Tarocchi; Hill, nos. 1068, 1089). The shoes are often open to give the impression of a sandal showing the toes (Mantegna's *Parnassus*). On the sword as a legitimate attribute of Mercury, see above, p. 74 note 1; for Mercury's helmet, cf. Petrarch, *Africa* III, 174 ff., also Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum* II, vii, who refers to Statius (*Thebais* I, 305). However enigmatic in other respects, there is no ground for doubting that this figure is Mercury.

[2] Gyraldus, *Opera* I, 419; II, 734. Cartari, *Imagini*, p. 563 (s.v. 'Gratie'): 'come ci insegnarono gli antichi parimente nella imagine delle Gratie, facendo che fosse loro scorta e duce Mercurio'. Also Ripa, s.v. 'Venustà'. The ancient monuments of that type are listed in Daremberg-Saglio, s.v. 'Gratiae'.

[3] Tongues of flame on the chlamys of Hermes were an 'authentic' attribute, as shown in a drawing of an archaic Greek Hermes in Cyriacus of Ancona, Bodl. MS Can. Misc. 280, fol. 68[r] (*Italian Illuminated Manuscripts from* 1400 *to* 1550, *Catalogue of an Exhibition*, Oxford, 1948, no. 44). The drawing is reproduced in Panofsky-Saxl, 'Classical Mythology in Mediaeval Art', *Metropolitan Museum Studies* IV (1933), p. 265, fig. 44, where the adornment of the chlamys is visible and appears similar to Botticelli's. Through a copy in the possession of Schedel (Cod. Monac. lat. 714) Cyriacus's sketch became known to Dürer (cf. O. Jahn, 'Cyriacus von Ancona und Albrecht Dürer', *Aus der Altertumswissenschaft*, 1868, pp. 349 ff.) who derived from it a design of Hermes (Vienna, Kunsthist. Mus., L. 420), again with flames on the chlamys. Engraved as a woodcut-frontispiece to Apianus, *Inscriptiones sacrosanctae vetustatis*, 1534; cf. H. W. Davies, *Devices of the Early Printers*, frontispiece and p. 55.

[4] IV, 245 f. Cf. Warburg, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

But this is an agitated passage. Virgil describes how the swift messenger of the gods, by lifting his magic staff, gains control over the clouds and winds, and sails through them like a bird. That the most volatile of gods stands quietly on the ground, combining the part of a 'skimmer of clouds' with that of a pensive deity, points surely to a very particular, 'philosophical' idea of Mercury.

Not only was Mercury the shrewdest and swiftest of the gods, the god of eloquence, the skimmer of clouds, the psychopompos, the leader of the Graces, the mediator between mortals and gods bridging the distance between earth and heaven:—to humanists Mercury was above all the 'ingenious' god of the probing intellect, sacred to grammarians and metaphysicians, the patron of lettered inquiry and interpretation to which he had lent his very name (ἑρμηνεία),[1] the revealer of secret or 'Hermetic' knowledge, of which his magical staff became a symbol. In a word, Hermes was the divine *mystagogue*.

Because 'he calls the mind back to heavenly things through the power of reason', Ficino assigned to him the first place in the 'converting triad which leads back to the upper world': *trinitas conversoria sive ad supera reductoria in qua primum Mercurius tenet gradum animos per rationem ad sublimia revocans.*[2] The removal of clouds would indeed be a proper occupation for a god who presides over the reasoning soul, particularly as Ficino himself used the simile to characterize in Plotinus's *Enneads* the enlightening force of intellectual contemplation: 'Animus affectibus ad materiam *quasi nubibus procul expulsis* ad intellectualis pulchritudinis lumen extemplo convertitur.'[3] And a power to dispel the mental clouds was explicitly ascribed also by Boccaccio to the staff of Mercury: 'Hac praeterea virga dicunt Mercurium . . . et tranare nubila, id est turbationes auferre.'[4]

Even so, one may doubt whether Mercury's concern with clouds is to be understood in the *Primavera* entirely in a negative sense, as if he were purging the mind or the air of an obstruction. For that his gaze is too contemplative (fig. 32), his bearing too poetical. He plays with the clouds rather as a Platonic hierophant, touching them but lightly because they are the beneficent veils through which the splendour of transcendent truth may reach the beholder without destroying him. To 'reveal the mysteries' is to move the veils while preserving their dimness, so that the truth may penetrate but

[1] Plato, *Cratylus* 407E ff.; Diodorus Siculus I, 16; *Orphic Hymns* xxviii, 6; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* I, xvii. On these etymologies see Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermes Trismégiste* I (1944), pp. 71 f.; Dieterich, *Abraxas*, p. 72 note 2.

[2] *Opera*, p. 1559.

[3] Ficino's heading to *Enneads* I, vi, 7; see Plotinus, *Opera* (1492), fol. 48^{v} (italics mine).

[4] *Genealogia deorum* XII, lxii. See also III, xx: 'Ventos insuper hac virga medicus [i.e. Mercurius] amovet, dum stultas egrotantium opiniones suasionibus et rationibus veris removet, auferendo timorem.'

not glare. The transcendent secret is kept hidden, yet made to transpire through the disguise. 'Nec mysteria quae non occulta,' wrote Pico in the *Heptaplus*;[1] or, in his Commentary on Benivieni's *Amore*: 'Divine things must be concealed under enigmatic veils and poetic dissimulation.'[2] As an *interpres secretorum* (Boccaccio's phrase for Mercury),[3] Mercury looks upward and touches the clouds. 'Summus animae ad Deum ascendentis gradus caligo dicitur atque lumen.'[4] The highest wisdom is to know that the divine light resides in clouds.

But if it is the hidden light of intellectual beauty (*intellectualis pulchritudinis lumen*) to which Mercury raises his eyes and lifts his magic wand—then his posture also agrees with his role as 'leader of the Graces'; for in turning away from the world to contemplate the Beyond, he continues the action begun in their dance. The Grace of Chastity, who is seen from the back, looks in his direction because it is the transcendent love—*amore divino*—toward which she is driven by the flame of the blindfolded Cupid. While she remains linked to her sisters by the 'knot which the Graces are loth to loosen', she unites and transcends the peculiarities of Beauty and Passion by following Mercury, the guide of spirits. And perhaps divine love, as a variant of death, is also intended by the falling flames on Mercury's cloak, since flames like these appear also on the mantle of the Madonna Poldi-Pezzoli, and fill the heavenly spheres in Botticelli's illustrations of the *Paradiso*. 'Amor che nella mente mi ragiona . . .'[5] In Bocchi's *Symbolicae quaestiones* a youthful Mercury, silently contemplating the mysteries above, is defined as an image of *divinus amator* (fig. 20).[6]

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If Platonic Love were understood only in the narrow, popular sense in which it means a complete disengagement from earthly passions, the solitary figure of Mercury would be the only Platonic lover in the picture (fig. 22). But Ficino knew his Plato too well not to realize that, after gazing into the Beyond, the lover was supposed to return to this world and move it by the strength of his clarified passion. The composition of the painting is therefore not fully understood, nor the role of Mercury quite comprehended, until he and Zephyr are seen as symmetrical figures. To turn away from the world with the detachment of Mercury, to re-enter the world with the impetuosity of

[1] Prooemium, ed. Garin, p. 172.

[2] III, xi, 9 (ed. Garin, p. 581). See also the discussion on *nubes* in Ripa, s.v. 'Sapienza divina'; also s.v. 'Bellezza'.

[3] *Genealogia deorum* XII, lxii.

[4] Ficino, *Opera*, p. 1014 (*In Dionysium Areopagitam*).

[5] Dante, *Convivio* III, 1 f.; *Purgatorio* II, 112.

[6] Symbolon no. cxliii (ed. 1574): 'Fert tacitus, vivit, vincit divinus amator.' For the association of Hermes with Eros, see Gyraldus I, p. 302 ('Hermerotes'). Also *Symposium* 202E: ἑρμηνεύειν as a power of Eros. An illustration of Hermeros in Hill, no. 975 (medal of Filarete). On the usefulness of Bocchi in Quattrocento studies, cf. above, p. 71 note 2.

Zephyr, these are the two complementary forces of love, of which Venus is the guardian and Cupid the agent: 'Reason the card, but passion is the gale'.

For the counterplay between Mercury and Zephyr it must also be remembered that their mythological parts are related. As a mover of clouds Mercury is a kind of wind-god. 'Ventos agere Mercurii est', writes Boccaccio in the *Genealogia Deorum*;[1] and when Zeus invites Mercury in the *Aeneid* to take to the sky and drive the winds, he explicitly names the winds as zephyrs:

Vade age, nate, voca ζephyros et labere pinnis.[2]

Since breath and spirit are but one afflatus (the Latin word *spiritus* signifying both), Zephyr and Mercury represent two phases of one periodically recurring process. What descends to the earth as the breath of passion, returns to heaven in the spirit of contemplation.

Between these extremes unfold the triadic movements characteristic of the *Theologia Platonica*. Not only do the groups 'driven' by Zephyr and 'guided' by Mercury exhibit mutations of a triadic pattern, but the entire picture seems to spell out the three phases of the Neoplatonic dialectic: *emanatio-conversio-remeatio*; that is, 'procession' in the descent from Zephyr to Flora, 'conversion' in the dance of the Graces, and 'reascent' in the figure of Mercury. (Or to put it in terms of Proclus's 'three causes', by which Pico preferred to describe the cycle: *causa efficiens, causa exemplaris,* and *causa finalis.*)[3] Since an orientation toward the Beyond, from which all things flow and to which they all return, is the primary tenet of this philosophy, the composition and mood of the painting are pervaded by a sense of that invisible world toward which Mercury turns and from which Zephyr enters.

The three verbs *ingredi, congredi,* and *aggredi* were rather effectively used by Ficino to distinguish between the different disguises under which transcendent Beauty holds converse with the soul: 'aggreditur animum admiranda, ut amanda congreditur, ingreditur ut iucunda.'[4] And tracing each phase through a new modulation he defined *Veritas* as the aim of the first, *Concordia* of the second, and *Pulchritudo* of the third. Although Botticelli's painting is composed in a different key, being held throughout in the mood of Venus, it would be legitimate to infer that, within the limitations of that mood, the detachment of Mercury aims at *Veritas*, the dance of the Graces at *Concordia*,

[1] II, vii.

[2] IV, 223. See also W. H. Roscher, *Hermes der Windgott* (1878).

[3] As it is the *causa exemplaris* which determines the Platonic 'participation' between divine models and earthly images, this would also explain why Venus and Amor, who dominate the action of all the figures, attend more specifically to the action of the Graces.

[4] *Opera*, p. 1559.

and the gift of Flora at *Pulchritudo*. But it is questionable to what extent such excursions into a *finesse* of Ficino's system still contribute to an understanding of the painting. Being composed in a didactic style, the picture is governed by the kind of schematism which it delighted Ficino to spin out. The marvel is that, in Botticelli's treatment, philosophical pedantry has become so infused with lyrical sentiment that, for many generations of beholders, the sentiment of the picture has extinguished the thought, with the result that the mood itself has been too loosely interpreted. To restore the balance one must stress the intellectual character in Botticelli, which induced Vasari to call him *persona sofistica*. This process should sharpen the sense of the *lyrisme exact*, but be stopped when it begins to detract from it.[1]

Concerning Ficino it is important to remember that, as a philosopher, he systematically placed the visual medium below the verbal. Divine names, he explained, deserve greater veneration than divine statuary 'because the image of God is more expressively rendered by an artifice of the mind than by manual works'.[2] Surprising though it may seem in a philosopher whose arguments were so often clothed in allegories and apologues which lent themselves easily to visual translation, Ficino's own visual sensibility was slight, and his thoughts on that subject are those of a stranger.[3] The case might be compared to that of a poet who, endowed with a sensitive ear for words but no ear for music, writes poetry that inspires musicians.

[1] If, for example, Venus represents the soul as defined by Plotinus and Ficino, the groups in the foreground, in unfolding the phases of the soul, might possibly conform to one of the traditional divisions: as for instance *anima vegetativa* (Flora), *anima sensitiva* (Graces), *anima intellectiva* (Mercury). But although that classification occurs in Aristotle, Plotinus, Dante (*Convivio* III, ii), and Ficino (e.g. *In Timaeum* XXVII, *Opera*, p. 1452), it cannot be regarded as vital to the picture because no pictorial feature is lost if we forget it, or gained if we remember it.—The theory first proposed, I believe, by J. A. Symonds that the painting refers to Lucretius V, 736–9 should be qualified. The passage describes a procession of Spring (*Ver*) which is led by Amor who 'walks ahead' of Venus joined to Ver, while Zephyr and Flora play around them. Although some of the *dramatis personae* are the same, which is almost inevitable in an allegory of Spring, their grouping bears no relation to the picture; and above all, some of the chief characters are different. Mercury and the Graces do not appear in Lucretius, while Ver, whom he explicitly joins to Venus (*it Ver et Venus*), is not personified by Botticelli. Politian, on the other hand, did certainly have the Lucretius passage in mind when he wrote *Giostra* I, 68, but more specifically he remembered Horace and Ovid; and it is from this compound, reorganized by a philosophic argument, that the *Primavera* descends.

[2] *In Philebum* I, xi, *Opera*, p. 1217. The statement flatly contradicts Gombrich's suggestion that in Ficino's system 'the visual symbol . . . is superior to the name' ('*Icones Symbolicae*', *op. cit.*, p. 170), and that Ficino's sense for 'the special virtues inherent in the visual symbol would have contributed to the enhanced status of the figurative arts' (*ibid.*, p. 184). A case in point is Ficino's medal, Hill no. 974. In marked contrast to Renaissance custom, its reverse shows no visual symbol at all but only the name PLATONE.

[3] See Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, pp. 305 ff. Although a slight overstatement, Panofsky's remark that Ficino had 'no interest whatever in art' (*Dürer* I, p. 169) comes closer to the truth than the reverse opinion. It is important to draw a clear distinction, which one misses in Chastel's *Marsile Ficin et l'art*, between Ficino's effect on the arts and his estimation of them.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BIRTH OF VENUS

A singularly arid part of Ficino's doctrine is his theory of permutations. Had he explained it more fully in one of his letters, we might have heard the conversational tone by which he made it pleasing to his listeners. But apparently the theory was so elementary that the letters took its knowledge for granted. As a result we are reduced to learning it for ourselves from the long-winded commentary on Plotinus. Since the theory is basic to the invention and composition of Botticelli's pictures, at least one example of it should be given here.

In explaining the third book of the first *Ennead*, which in the original is called 'On Dialectic' but for which Ficino introduced the more elaborate title 'On the Threefold Return of the Soul to the Divine (*De triplici reditu animae ad divinum*)',[1] Ficino started with a triad of gods—Mercury, Venus, and Apollo—and expanded it into an ennead, that is, a ninefold series, because each of the three gods asserts his power for himself and also in combination with one of the others. The nine possible variations are listed by Ficino in this sequence: (1) Mercury, (2) Mercury-Venus, (3) Mercury-Apollo, (4) Venus, (5) Venus-Mercury, (6) Venus-Apollo, (7) Apollo, (8) Apollo-Mercury, (9) Apollo-Venus. In this list the constellation of Venus-Mercury, which Botticelli represented in the *Primavera*, occupies the centre (5), and that is perhaps more than an accident since it is a combination greatly praised in Plotinus's *De amore* when he speaks of the soul (ψυχή) conjoined to the mind (νοῦς) as the most perfect form of Aphrodite.[2] The constellation was also well-chosen for a youth, the owner of the picture, whose growing sensibility and intellect or, in Ficino's words, *pulchritudo et ingenium*, should be placed under the joint tutelage of Venus and Mercury. That would secure for him the double character of *philosophus et amator*, a most Platonic quality.[3]

[1] *Opera*, p. 1559. In his translation of Plotinus he called it *De triplici ad mundum intelligibilem ascensu*, but seems to have avoided the original (that is, Porphyry's) title Περὶ διαλεκτικῆς.

[2] *Enneads* III, v, 9, in Ficino's translation: 'Anima [ψυχή] cum mente [νοῦς] simul existens et ab ipsa mente subsistens, rursus rationibus hinc imbuta, ipsaque pulchra pulchris admodum exornata, affluentiaque luxurians, adeo ut in ea iam splendores varios liceat contueri pulchrorumque omnium simulacra: id, inquam, totum Venus ipsa censetur ['Αφροδίτη μέν ἐστι τὸ πᾶν].'

[3] For similar configurations see Ficino, *Opera*, p. 1619: '. . . a Mercurio inquisitio quaelibet et expres-

But however auspicious, Platonic, and profound the combination of Aphrodite and Hermes may have appeared,[1] there remains the fact that it is only one of nine, and if one takes the full system of Ficino's triads into account, only one of (at least) twenty-seven combinations. This implies not only that the picture must have been keyed to a particular mode, but that for a fuller awareness of that mode it would be helpful, if not necessary, to have some sense for the complementary keys, that is, for the possible modulations of which the theme was susceptible. Of the many historical disfigurations to which Renaissance art has been subjected, one of the saddest is that pictures which were conceived in a cyclical spirit, have come down to us as solitary paintings. In the case of the *Primavera*, the spectator was probably meant to sense that the grouping here so clearly dominated by Venus and guided by Mercury, was capable of an Apollonian translation, of the kind proposed by Ficino; and of this there is an example in a contemporary musical source.

At the top of the frontispiece to the *Practica Musice* of Gafurius, which pictures the musical universe (above, p. 47), Apollo is so placed that the Three Graces appear on his right and a pot of flowers on his left. The latter attribute looks like a gratuitous ornament, but when we remember from the *Primavera* how Venus was placed between the Graces and Flora to indicate her spiritual and her sensuous manifestations, we may suspect that Apollo was to be endowed with a similar inclusiveness of powers.[2] The correspondence becomes more explicit in the system of musical intervals illustrated below this headpiece and explained in the book.[3] Here the note associated with Apollo or Sol is again placed 'in the centre' (*in medio residens complectitur omnia Phoebus*) but in such a way that there are three notes below it and four notes above, and the last of these transcends altogether the planetary music and belongs to the sphere of the fixed stars:

8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

sio, a Venere charitas et humanitas. . . . Sic eorum opinio confirmatur qui Veneri Mercurium anteponunt'; *Supplementum Ficinianum* I, p. 56: 'Picus heros ingeniosus et pulcher Mercurio et Venere natus. . . .' See also Cartari, *Imagini*, p. 541, 'Venere con Mercurio'. On a medal, Hill no. 219, Mercury points upward to the star of Venus: EGO INTUS, VENUS EXTRA, a compliment to the intelligence and beauty of a woman (certainly not satirical, as Hill surmises).

[1] On the 'blest Hermaphrodite', see below, pp. 164 ff., 173 ff.

[2] In a more abundant form the same combination, the Graces placed against a rich foliage of laurel, which makes them look like dryads, recurs in Agostino di Duccio's relief of Apollo in the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini. Since the Greek and Latin words for 'matter' signify sylvan vegetation (ὕλη, *silva*), it was not illogical to suggest the musical animation of matter (νοῦς ὑλικός) by placing the Graces in a sylvan setting.

[3] Originally published as a frontispiece to Gafurius, *Practica musice* (1496), the woodcut was reprinted with commentary in Gafurius, *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum* IV, xii (1518), fol. 94^{v}. Cf. Warburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 271, 412 ff., 429 f.; above p. 46 note 5.

The resulting division of the octave, with the fourth note treated as central and the eighth as transcendent, and the remaining six forming symmetrical triads, corresponds very closely to the composition of the *Primavera*. It is possible therefore that the painting was meant to carry a musical suggestion, the eight figures representing, as it were, an octave in the key of Venus. Transposed into the key of Apollo, the highest note of the octave would belong to the muse Urania, who was frequently represented in an averted posture gazing at the stars,[1] while the first and lowest note (Clio) was compared by Gafurius to 'the sigh of Proserpina', breaking (as he said) the silence of the earth. If we recall that on her return in the spring Proserpina was pictured as strewing flowers, it becomes rather likely that an echo of that myth, or of its musical equivalent, was meant to be sensed in the progression from Zephyr to Flora. Whether these themes were to be resumed, transposed, and more fully developed in a picture of Apollo presiding over the Muses, much as Venus presides over the Graces and Nymphs, we do not know. It is certain, on the other hand, that the *Birth of Venus* came from the same house as the *Primavera*; and this picture in its turn is an example of a change of key, or modulation.

After the labyrinth of the *Primavera* it is something of a relief to discover how simply the same philosophy of love has been restated in the *Birth of Venus* (fig. 30). Four figures in the place of eight, and so grouped that a plain triad emerges from their configuration. Driven by the blowing winds who are represented as a pair of lovers, Politian's *zefiri amorosi*,[2] Venus glides towards the shore where the Hour of Spring spreads out a flowered mantle to receive her, while the roses which fall from the breath of the Zephyrs perfume the foaming sea. Had not Pico della Mirandola declared that the biblical words 'spiritus ferebatur super aquas' refer to the moving spirit of Eros ('spiritus amoris'),[3] one would hesitate to apply the phrase to the Zephyrs, for they clearly represent the breath of passion by which the new-born Venus is moved and inspired—*da' zefiri lascivi spinta a proda*;[4] but on the shore the mantle prepared for her protection is held out by the chaste Hour. The goddess's own posture, of the classical *Venus pudica*, expresses the dual nature of love, both sensuous and chaste, of which her attendants represent the separate aspects. But since the transcendent 'union of contraries' is rendered by a momentary gesture, the universal symbol demanded by the dialectical programme becomes a transitory scene:

Giurar potresti che dell' onde uscisse
La Dea premendo con la destra il crino,
Con l' altro il dolce pomo ricoprisse.[5]

[1] For example on the title page of Hyginus, *Astronomicon poeticon* (1502), where Urania turns her back. See also the averted Urania in Raphael's *Parnassus*.

[2] *Giostra* I, cxiii, 4.

[3] *Heptaplus* III, ii.

[4] *Giostra* I, xcix, 7.

[5] *Ibid.* I, ci, 1–3.

The transient effect of Botticelli's Venus, the more surprising in view of the static quality of its ancient prototypes (fig. 31),[1] was prepared for Botticelli by Politian's mastery in ostensibly describing a plastic monument while actually dissolving it into a sequence of episodes. Both poet and painter were unquestionably aiming at recapturing the spirit of the lost *Venus Anadyomene* of Apelles, which was known from ancient descriptions.[2] In addition to its poetical and didactic character, Botticelli's painting must therefore also be classed among those attempts at antiquarian revival by which the vision of a lost painting of antiquity was to be conjured up before the beholder. While the *Calumny of Apelles* by Botticelli is a strained example of these learned ambitions, in the *Birth of Venus* the denseness of archaeology is absorbed by a lucid elegance. Considering all the literary refinements that were to be satisfied by the picture—philosophical, poetical, antiquarian—its freshness and successfully feigned naiveté remain a singular achievement. It is as if the spiritedness of Politian had for once out-distanced the prolixities of Ficino and Pico.

Even so, a new poetic dimension will be sensed in the picture, and also in the myth as related by Politian, when they are compared with the peculiarly laboured interpretation which Pico offered for 'this mystery' of the Birth of Venus.[3] Since Venus signifies beauty (*bellezza la quale si chiama Venere*), she represents for Pico a composite principle: for 'whenever several diverse things concur in constituting a third, which is born from their just mixture and temperation, the bloom which results from their proportionate composition is called beauty.' Composition, however, presupposes multiplicity, which cannot be found in the realm of pure being, but only in the chaotic realm of change. Venus must therefore arise from 'that formless nature of which we have said that every creature is composed';[4] and this is signified by the waters of the sea 'because water is in a continuous flux and easily receptive to any form'. But in order to produce the beauty of Venus, the Heraclitean element of mutability requires transfiguration by a divine principle of form; and that need is signified by the barbarous legend, which Pico quoted from Hesiod's Theogony, that the foam of the sea (ἀφρός), from which the heavenly Aphrodite arose, was produced by the castration of Uranus. Being the god of heaven, Uranus conveys to formless matter the seed of ideal forms: 'and because ideas would not have in themselves variety and diversity if they were not mixed with formless nature, and because without variety there cannot be beauty, so it

[1] On the acquaintance of the Quattrocento with the type of statue now best known by the Medici Venus, see Warburg, *op. cit.*, p. 308, note to p. 10.

[2] The classical texts are listed in Pauly-Wissowa I, 2020, s.v. 'Anadyomene'. In imitation of *Anthologia Graeca* XVI, 178–82, Politian wrote a Greek epigram on the Venus Anadyomene of Apelles (*Opera* II, fol. 102v), on which see Frey-Sallmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 119 f., with reference to Botticelli.

[3] *Commento* II, xvi f. (ed. Garin II, xviii ff., pp. 509–12).

[4] Cf. above, p. 83.

justly follows that Venus could not be born if the testicles of Uranus did not fall into the waters of the sea.'[1]

The unpleasant machinery of the myth, which is far remote from Botticelli, will seem less pedantic and far-fetched when it is understood that 'dismemberment' is a regular figure of speech in the Neoplatonic dialectic. The castration of Uranus is of one type with the dismemberment of Osiris, Attis, Dionysus, all of which signify the same mystery to the neo-Orphic theologians: For whenever the supreme One descends to the Many, this act of creation is imagined as a sacrificial agony, as if the One were cut into pieces and scattered. Creation is conceived in this way as a cosmogonic death, by which the concentrated power of one deity is offered up and dispersed: but the descent and diffusion of the divine power are followed by its resurrection, when the Many are 'recollected' into the One.[2]

Why the dialectical rhythm of the One and the Many should be invested with such fearful ritualistic emotions was explained rather clearly and sensibly by Proclus. These fables, he said, serve the purpose 'that we may not only exercise the intellectual part of the soul through contending reasons, but that the divine [intuitive] part of the soul may more perfectly receive the knowledge of beings through its sympathy with more mystic concerns. For, from other [rational] discourses we appear similar to those who are [soberly] compelled to the reception of truth; but from fables we suffer in an ineffable manner, . . . venerating the mystic information which they contain.'[3] Pico also made it a practice thus to twist abruptly a seemingly rational figure of speech into a violent myth, as when he compared 'the art of discourse or reasoning' first to the steps of a ladder, and then added that on those steps 'we shall sometimes descend, with titanic force rending the unity like Osiris into many parts, and we shall sometimes ascend, with the force of Phoebus collecting the parts like the limbs of Osiris into a unity.'[4]

[1] While Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum* III, xxiii, followed Cicero in assuming that the Venus born from the sea was the 'second' Venus (*De natura deorum* III, 59), Pico adopted the more common view and identified her with Venus Urania, the foam being the seed of Uranus (Heaven).

[2] See Macrobius, *In Somnium Scipionis* I, xii; also Gyraldus, *Opera* I, 273, on 'Macrobius ex Orphica theologia'. Boyancé, *Le culte des Muses*, pp. 83–8, believes Olympiodorus was justified in reading the Neoplatonic allegory of the dismemberment and resurrection of Dionysus-Zagreus into *Phaedo* 67C ff. (the soul as 'divided' throughout the body, from where it has to be 'recollected into itself'). But while it might be argued that the Neoplatonic elaboration of the myth was sanctioned by that passage among others, it is difficult to prove that the passage actually implies the myth, or is meant to recall the corresponding ritual. On the other hand, Plato's use of the myth in other places is so veiled, and yet so undeniable (cf. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 155 f., 176 ff. notes 131–35), that an outright rejection of Boyancé's view seems as difficult as a simple acceptance. All that may (and possibly must) be said is that Plato's thoughts on the relation of body and soul, as seen by his frequent references to catharsis, are shot through with Dionysiac allusions. But in contrast to Neoplatonic ritualism, the image of 'breaking' for 'making a singular into a plural' occurs in Plato only as a jest, *Meno* 77A.

[3] *Theologia Platonica* I, vi; tr. Taylor, p. 18. On the belief in the efficacy of myths through sympathy, see Boyancé, *Le culte des Muses*, p. 163, with reference to Proclus, *In Rempublicam* II, 108, and Julian, *Orationes* VII, 216C.

[4] *De hominis dignitate* (ed. Garin, p. 116), tr. Forbes.

The static image of a ladder, incongruously combined with the agony and resurrection of Osiris, produces that ambiguous state of understanding in which reason becomes charged with ritual.

Perhaps the clearest description of this poetico-theological device is in Plutarch's *On the* εἰ *at Delphi*. Because of his sane, unperturbed way of facing these awkward arguments, Plutarch is of invaluable help in their study. 'We hear from the theologians', he writes, 'both prose writers and poets, that the god is by nature indestructible and eternal, but yet, under the impulsion of some predestined plan and purpose, he undergoes transformations in his being. . . . When the god is changed and distributed into winds, water, earth, stars, plants, and animals, they describe this experience and transformation allegorically by the terms "rending" and "dismemberment". They apply to him the names Dionysus, Zagreus, Nyctelius, Isodaites, and they construct allegorical myths in which the transformations that have been described are represented as death and destruction followed by restoration to life and rebirth.'[1]

These mystical Ultimates, being extremes, cannot be pictured except as catastrophes;[2] and Plato suggested, with little success, that it is best not to picture them at all. In the *Republic* (378A), the Castration of Uranus takes the first place among the prohibited fables: '. . . If possible, they had better be buried in silence. But if there is an absolute necessity for their mention, a chosen few might hear them in a mystery (δι' ἀπορρήτων), and they should sacrifice not a common pig, but some huge and unprocurable victim; and then the number of hearers will be very few indeed.' It might be thought that Botticelli and Politian had followed Plato's rule, and omitted any allusion to the Castration of Uranus from their depiction of the Birth of Venus; but it is not so.[3] Politian describes the white foam as the divine seed fallen from the sky in the opening stanza of the episode:

[1] *On the* εἰ *at Delphi* 9 (*Moralia* 388F–389A), tr. Linforth, *op. cit.*, pp. 317 f.

[2] Since dispersal through death is conceived here as an act of creation, it follows logically that resurrection from death must appear as a destructive force. The end of the world, when all things return to the One, is pictured as a supreme conflagration, Plutarch, *op. cit.*, 388F, 389C, διακόσμησις being reversed in ἐκπύρωσις, the god 'sets fire to nature and reduces all things to one likeness' (tr. Linforth, *loc. cit.*). By the same logic the myth of Saturn eating his children was greeted as a promise of redemption: the Many returning to the One, a reversal of primeval 'dismemberment', cf. *Enneads* V, i, 7; also Sallustius, *Concerning the Gods and the Universe* IV (ed. Nock, p. 4), where κατάποσις is a symbol of ἐπιστροφή. The Neoplatonic artifice of lifting the primitive impulses of cannibalism and castration to the level of philosophical mysteries is a remarkable instance of *évolution régressive*.

[3] Ficino followed the rule more faithfully than either Politian or Pico. Except for an inconclusive digression in his commentary on the *Philebus* (chapter xi, *Opera*, p. 1217: 'intelligendum est forte . . .') and a notably short commentary on *Enneads* V, viii, 13 (*Opera*, p. 1769), the allegory of the castration of Uranus seems to be absent from Ficino's writings. Even in *De amore*, where the nature of Venus Urania is so fully discussed, the circumstances attending her birth are passed over in silence. Obedience to a prohibition of Plato seems the most likely explanation for this remarkable omission.

Nel tempestoso Egeo in grembo a Teti
Si vede il fusto genitale accolto,
Sotto diverso volger di pianeti
Errar per l'onde in bianca schiume avvolto;

but before the stanza is ended, the *fusto genitale* has already been superseded by the pleasing image, from the Homeric Hymns, of Venus driven to the shore by zephyrs:

E dentro nata in atti vaghi, e lieti
Una donzella non con uman volto,
Da' Zefiri lascivi spinta a proda,
Gir sopra un nicchio; e par che 'l ciel ne goda.[1]

The concluding phrase—'the sky rejoiced'—entirely blots out the initial horror, for it suggests, as do also the succeeding stanzas, that Uranus is no longer a solitary god but takes pleasure in finding himself incarnated in his new-born daughter ('In thee I am well pleased').

In Botticelli's painting, the accents are distributed with the same care and in the same order of importance. As in Politian's poem, the white foam on the waves is emphatically stressed, but it is incidental to the chief scene. While the general atmosphere is that of a cosmogonic myth, and shows how the divine spirit, in the words of Plutarch, is 'changed and distributed into winds and water', the moment chosen for representation is that following after the cosmic birth: The new-born Venus, already risen from the sea, is blown to the shore by the winds of spring. And as if to suggest, through a poetic after-image, that the sea has been fertilized by the sky, a mystical rain of roses issues from the breath of the wind-god—'the spirit moving over the waters'.[2]

* * * * *

[1] *Giostra* I, xcix.

[2] The rain of flowers, as a symbol of divine impregnation, recurs in Signorelli's *Immaculata* (Il Gesù, Cortona). An elaborate commentary on 'the spirit moving over the waters' was inserted by Boyle in *The Sceptical Chymist* (Part II), the great naturalist having shown by his earlier book on Seraphic Love that he was an expert in Renaissance theology: 'And among those that acknowledge the Books of Moses, many have been inclined to think water to have been the primitive and universal matter, by perusing the beginning of Genesis, where the . . . component parts [of the universe] did orderly, as it were, emerge out of that vast abyss by the operation of the Spirit of God, who is said to have been moving Himself, as hatching females do (as the original, *Merahephet*, is said to import, and it seems to signify in one of the two other places wherein alone I have met with it in the Hebrew Bible) upon the face of the waters; which being, as may be supposed, divinely impregnated with the seeds of all things, were by that productive incubation qualified to produce them. But you, I presume, expect that I should discourse of this matter like a naturalist, not a philologer.' It is interesting that, independently of Renaissance texts, A. A. Barb, 'Diva Matrix', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XVI (1953), pp. 205, 219 note 75, found reasons in comparative mythology to associate Genesis i, 2 ('the spirit moving over the waters') with the Birth of Venus as painted by Botticelli. A question incidentally raised by Barb (*op. cit.*, p. 203) as to a possible common source of Paracelsus, *Opus paramirum* IV ('De matrice'), and Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium*

The self-division by which the Orphic gods unfold their powers and multiply, diminishes in violence as the emanations descend from the highest to an intermediate level. In the supreme One, which is simple and ineffable, division appears as 'dismemberment' because it is only by a kind of self-immolation, a logical μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος, that the One can be made over into the Many. But particular deities who, like Venus, are inherently composite and contrarious, contain multiplicity within their own natures and are hence not agonized when their power is spread out, or paired with that of other deities in a new combination. This is important for understanding the harmonious relation in which the *Venus Urania*, born from the sea, stands to the sheltered Venus, who, in a grove illumined by golden fruits, gently presides over the rites of *Primavera*. The transition from the elemental to the pastoral setting is defined by the flowered mantle of Spring which is spread over Venus as she approaches the earth. In the Platonic scale of things this is a descent, a vulgarization; for the wealth of colours and variety of shapes which delight the eye when it perceives beauty on earth, are but a veil behind which the splendour of the pure celestial beauty is concealed. But in recognizing that the clothed Venus is the *Venere vulgare* or *Aphrodite Pandemos*, whom Plato and the Platonists opposed to the *Aphrodite Urania* (*Venere celeste*),[1] we must beware of oversimplifying the contrast by assuming that the vulgar Venus is purely sensuous and does not share in the celestial glory. Pico himself, who developed the theme that the 'two Venuses' in Plato were meant to illustrate the distinction between a celestial and an earthly vision of beauty, warned his readers that the desire of love aroused by earthly beauty is in its turn of two opposite kinds, 'de' quali l'uno è bestiale, e l'altro è umano'.[2] While a purely sensuous instinct will incline to

haeresium V, xix, 11 ff., both of which refer to a 'cosmogonic womb' in remarkably similar terms, may perhaps be answered by reference to a text that is easily overlooked because it is so obvious, namely *Timaeus* 49A–53B, on 'the receptacle of all generation' (πάσης γενέσεως ὑποδοχή). The literary effect of that peculiar passage, treated deliberately as mysterious by Plato (μετ' ἀναισθησίας ἅπτὸν λογισμῷ τινὶ νόθῳ, 52B), was so great that it accounts on the one hand for Plotinus's theory of matter as void (*Enneads* III, vi, 7), and on the other hand for the various 'heretical' hypostases of an active void or abyss. Paracelsus's term *matrix quattuor elementorum* corresponds exactly to the argument in the *Timaeus*. A residue of the doctrine in Aristotle (*Physica* I, ix, 192A, 22 ff.) gave Giordano Bruno, who knew the original in Plato, the chance for a long comical digression on the equation of *materia e femina* by one of the Aristotelian pedants in *De la causa, principio et uno* IV, introduced by the biblical quotation: *Et os vulvae numquam dicit: sufficit* (from Proverbs xxx, 16), which he interprets as meaning: 'materia recipiendis formis numquam expletur'. Rubens and Peiresc, when they discussed the *vulva deificata* on Graeco-Egyptian gems (Barb, *op. cit.*, p. 194; Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets*, pp. 80 f.), were certainly acquainted with Plutarch *De Iside et Osiride* 53–6 (*Moralia* 372E–373F), where Plutarch expanded the passage from the *Timaeus* into a vast Graeco-Egyptian allegory of creation. And since Rubens copied a portrait of Paracelsus (Museum, Brussels, no. 388; after the portrait attributed to Scorel, Louvre, no. 2567A), it is certain that he was interested in him.

[1] *Symposium* 180D–E; Ficino, *De amore* II, vii; Pico, *Commento* II, viii (ed. Garin II, x, p. 498). Cf. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 142 ff.

[2] *Commento* II, xxiv (ed. Garin III, ii, p. 524).

misplace the source of visual beauty in the body and seek the fruition of beauty in animal pleasures alone, the human lover will recognize that the Venus who appears clothed in an earthly garment is an 'image' of the celestial. 'And observe that Plotinus in his book *De amore* does not speak of the first celestial Love but only of this, and similarly he does not speak of the first Venus, but of the second', and far from characterizing her as the Venus Urania, he makes her descend into the 'prima anima', declaring 'che questa anima è chiamata Venere in quanto è in lei un certo amore splendido e specioso'.[1] If the distinction is overlooked, Pico warns,' it might appear as if Plato and Plotinus were in disagreement on this matter, whereas he who studies them carefully will notice that the complete and perfect cognition of celestial love was held by both of them together, because Plato dealt with that which is the first and pure celestial love, and Plotinus with the second which is its image.' Quite consistently Pico was led by these observations to go beyond the simple dichotomy of 'celestial' and 'vulgar', by expanding it into a triple division: *amore celeste, umano, e bestiale.*[2] And as the last of these was declared too low to deserve of philosophical consideration, at least from those who refused to 'profane the chaste amorous mysteries of Plato' (*profanare e' casti misteri amorosi di Platone*),[3] it follows that the Platonic doctrine of 'two Venuses' no longer designated two opposite kinds of love, one chaste and noble, the other sensuous and vain, but two noble loves called *Amore celeste e umano*, of which the second, confined to the variegated medium of sensibility, was but the humbler image of the first. 'Amore umano è proprio quello che disopra fu detto essere immagine dello amore celeste.'[4]

It was an inspired device in Botticelli to represent the *amore splendido e specioso* of the second Venus by endowing her with matron-like features (fig. 22). She who is the source of earthly splendour and whose role as a goddess of fertility is modestly suggested by her bulb-like figure, appears, in contrast to the wealth which she administers, as a restraining and moderating force, aware of her role as the vicar of a higher Venus of whom she is only an image or shadow (*ombra*),[5] although she exercises in her own realm an undisputed sovereignty. 'Motrice de' corpi ed alligata a questo ministerio',[6]

[1] *Ibid.* II, xxii (ed. Garin III, i, pp. 521 f.). The argument refers to *Enneads* III, v, 5–9. Pico slightly overstates his case since Plotinus begins by discussing both Venuses (III, v, 1—4), but it is true that the bulk of his argument, and particularly that part which interprets the myth of Poros and Penia, is confined to the second Venus.

[2] *Ibid.*, ed. Garin; pp. 524–31. Ficino, *De amore* VI, viii (*Opera*, pp. 1345 f.) had also discussed *amor divinus, humanus, ferinus* with regard to the 'two Venuses' in Plato, but without distinguishing Plato's celestial Venus from the noble but worldly Venus in Plotinus. Pico's insistence on this point was one of his many digs at the 'distinguished Platonist' whom he found, as may easily be the case with an assiduous compiler, both informative and muddle-headed.

[3] *Loc. cit.* (ed. Garin, p. 525).

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 537.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 463, 469.

she is the power that moves the visible world, infusing the transcendent order into the corporal: 'subietta a quella e padrona di questa'.[1]

[1] 'Two Venuses, one draped, the other nude', were mentioned in a letter by Calandra in which he described Mantegna's painting of Comus, now in the Louvre, which was finished by Costa after Mantegna's death. In this picture (cf. Wind, *Bellini's Feast of the Gods*, p. 47, with further literature), the characterization of the two Venuses leaves no doubt that the clothed Venus, while inferior to the naked, is also the more humble of the two. Horne, *Botticelli* (1908), p. 56, guessed at the right solution by a happy instinct while he was reading of the two Venuses in Junius, *De pictura veterum* (1637), a book so far distant in style from Botticelli that Horne referred to it with appropriate hesitation: 'Perhaps, in the two paintings of Venus, which Botticelli executed for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, is to be traced that double conception of Aphrodite; of Aphrodite Urania, the Heavenly Venus, the daughter of Uranus, born of the sea without mother; and of Aphrodite Pandemos, the daughter of Zeus and Dione, the Venus of universal nature, spiritualized by Botticelli in his painting of the "Spring", which certain later writers have sought to emphasize; and notably Franciscus Junius in his work "De Pictura Veterum" . . .'

CHAPTER IX

SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE

If we remember that Pico della Mirandola, in describing 'la violenzia dello amor celeste',[1] borrowed his images from a flaming passion, it seems not surprising, nor is it un-Platonic, that Divine Love should in the end have fostered a spiritual cult of the senses. This tendency was latent in it from the start. In so early a dialogue as Lorenzo Valla's *De voluptate* (1431), the Christian in his spiritual fervour and the Epicurean, of sensuous fantasy and caprice, find it possible to come to terms with each other, whereas neither is able to tolerate the frigidity which the Stoic mistakes for virtue. Some of the characteristic glow of Renaissance Platonism is due to this anti-stoical bias:

> *Witnesse the father of Philosophie,*
> *Which to his* Critias, *shaded oft from sunne,*
> *Of love full manie lessons did apply,*
> *The wich these Stoick censours cannot well deny.*[2]

While the Epicurean strain in Venetian life might otherwise disincline it toward Florentine dialectics, the praise of Pleasure in Ficino's Platonism could have been invented for Venetians.[3] In Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (fig. 39) the goddess is stretched out in sumptuous repose, facing the beholder with the placid air of a Venetian odalisque. It would seem, despite the reminiscence of a *Venus pudica*, that an undisguised hedonism had at last dispelled the Platonic metaphors. But in the background, by way of a gloss, two servants are occupied about a *cassone* from which they have taken out the mantle of Venus. In this marginal episode, which might be a Dutch interior, the cosmic mantle designed to cover the celestial Venus (cf. fig. 30), has been reduced to a comfortable domestic apparel befitting a *toilette de Venus*, and if there is a touch of drôlerie in the vernacular rendering of such a well-known mythological attribute, the

[1] *Commento* III, ii (ed. Garin, p. 537).
[2] *Faerie Queene* IV, Proem, 3.
[3] In this connexion it is interesting to note again that Ficino's *De voluptate* was separately published in two Aldine editions, Venice 1497 and 1516, together with selections from Iamblichus and Proclus.

change of style is the right accompaniment to the luxurious figure in the foreground. Epicurean Pleasure in its pure form, which Ficino reserved for the joys of heaven, is re-admitted to earth in Titian's paintings; but its effect is heightened by an echo of Platonism which enters as an accompanying theme into these hymns of physical well-being. In a book entitled *L'oeil écoute*, the orthodoxy of Paul Claudel discerned a trace of spirituality in Titian's 'paradis de la chair': 'On dirait que le monde spirituel est, sinon découvert, au moins reconnu et ouvert à notre désir sous les espèces de l'affection, en même temps que la grâce s'étend au corps humain, qu'elle pénètre, sous les espèces de la beauté.'

One wonders whether it is because a Stoic frost has so often invaded the garden of Plato that one of the most gracious Platonic-Epicurean pictures, a figured dialogue *de voluptate*, has acquired the title of *Sacred and Profane Love* (fig. 37). Inevitably the inappropriate name, of which no trace has been found earlier than 1700, has engendered futile and self-contradictory attempts to affix a sacred or profane character to one or the other of the two figures. To a conventional view of Christian virtues, there could be no doubt that Sacred Love would be decently clothed, and that the naked figure represented the profane.[1] But against that reading it has been justly observed that the composition of the picture gives the superior role to the figure that is nude. Her greater height, her more vigorous posture, her lifted arm, her condescending address, all seem to raise her above the listening figure whom she appears to persuade or admonish; and as if to stress her sacred nature, Titian painted a church in the background behind her, whereas a castle appears opposite, as an accompaniment to the figure elegantly clothed. Since furthermore, according to a well-established tradition, the absence of adornment is a sign of virtue and candour ('naked Truth', 'intrinsic Beauty'), there would seem to be an excellent case for ascribing a nobler character to the naked figure, and a more worldly nature to the figure that is clothed.[2] However, when that inference was first drawn, the visual evidence was again intercepted by a sanctimonious prejudice. It was assumed that the naked figure could not be the 'higher', and more sacred, unless she represented the chaster love, and *vice versa*.[3] But regardless of the question to what extent an abstemious morality was favoured by Renaissance Platonists, the characters in the painting express the opposite. The red colour of the cloak that spreads behind the figure on the right intensifies the sense of her passionate nature while the colours of

[1] A. Venturi, *Il museo e la Galleria Borghese* (1893), p. 104.

[2] On all these points Panofsky's argument in *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 150–60, and, more fully, *Hercules am Scheidewege*, pp. 173–80, seems to me absolutely conclusive. E. Petersen, 'Zu Meisterwerken der Renaissance: Bemerkungen eines Archäologen', *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* XVII (1906), pp. 182–7 ('Tizians *Amor sacro e profano*') was the first to associate the painting with the two Venuses in Ficino's *De amore* (p. 186).

[3] Essentially this is still Panofsky's view.

the clothed figure appear subdued by comparison, the red tones being here confined to the undergarment which shows only in the right sleeve and near the left foot while the surface of the dress is otherwise of a simple white.

It should therefore be admitted at the outset that the clothed figure combines two traits which 'these Stoic censors' are always inclined to separate: she is the more worldly of the two, and also the more restrained.[1] The beauty of her garment does not depend for its effect on embroideries, pearls, gold braid, or brocades which so often predominate in Renaissance dress:[2] for the splendour is achieved alone by the generous way in which the garment is draped, and it should be noticed that its chief ornament is a locked girdle.[3] The absence of any other jewels,[4] the fact that she prefers flowers for her adornment, wearing a small wreath of myrtle (*myrtus coniugalis*) in her hair and holding a few flowers on her lap, would suggest a gentle rather than an ambitious sensibility; and that is confirmed by her meditative expression. To convict her of an undue addiction to the vanities of the world, there remains only the suspicious fact that her gloved hand is resting on a closed vessel which has been supposed, on the analogy of Ripa's 'Short-lived Happiness', to contain gems and other riches. But this surmise reminds us of Plutarch's reflection 'that the Stoics rave worse than the poets'; for if Titian had intended us to understand that the vessel is filled with earthly treasures, presumably he would not have hesitated to paint them.[5] Instead he painted a vessel

[1] The same 'philosophy of clothes' can be studied in Giorgione's *Fête champêtre* in the Louvre. The nymphs, distinguished from the musicians by the absence of clothes, are meant to be recognized as 'divine presences', superior spirits from whose fountain the mortal musicians are nourished and with whom they commune through the power of music, but not through ordinary conversation, which the musicians address only to each other. In the Holkham *Venus* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and the corresponding paintings by Titian in Madrid and Berlin, the disparity between mortal and goddess is again brought out by an incongruity of costume, the clothed and the nude figures being juxtaposed in a studied discord which plays on the theme of *discordia concors*; but it is important to notice in these pictures a deliberate paradox of posture. While the mortal plays music under the inspiration of love (cf. Erasmus, *Adagia* s.v. *musicam docet amor*), he does not face the goddess directly, but turns his head over his shoulder to 'look back' at her; he thus enacts the Platonic ἐπιστροφή, the reversal of vision by which alone a mortal can hope to face transcendent Beauty, which is the source of divine *voluptas*. O. Brendel, 'The Interpretation of the Holkham *Venus*', *Art Bulletin* XXVIII (1946), pp. 65–75, suspected a Neoplatonic argument in these paintings, but adhered to the mistaken restriction of supreme Platonic love to *amor intellectualis*—clearly not Titian's theme. Although the composition seems specifically Venetian, the scheme of juxtaposing a clothed mortal to a 'transcendent' nude representing Venus can be traced back to Florentine marriage *cassoni*. See Schubring, *Cassoni*, pl. xxx, nos. 156 f.; pl. xxxviii, nos. 184 f.

[2] It is the more surprising that Scipione Francucci, a poet of the seventeenth century (on whom see L. Venturi, 'Note sulla Galleria Borghese', *L'arte* XII, 1909, pp. 37 ff.), should have found her barbarously overdressed, *di barbarica pompa*; quoted by Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 159 f.

[3] Cf. *Faerie Queene* IV, v, 3: 'That girdle gave the virtue of chaste love . . .' See also Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum* III, xxii; and Ripa, *Iconologia*, s.v. 'Venustà'.

[4] In photographs she appears to wear a bracelet, but this is actually the fringe of the glove.

[5] How little Titian's figure corresponds to *Felicità breve* in Ripa, may be seen from Ripa's description: 'A woman dressed in white and yellow, who wears a golden crown on her head and is adorned with various jewels. Raising her right arm high, she holds a sceptre entwined with the leaves of a gourd that

which is closed, and that is in itself meaningful, particularly as it contrasts with the open vessel near the other figure; and between the two there is a plucked rose.[1]

To understand the symbolism it may be helpful to inquire at what kind of fountain the two women are met.[2] That it is a fountain of love is shown by the presence of Amor who bends over the water and plays with it; but the reliefs with which the fountain is decorated have a severe, forbidding aspect. A man is being scourged, a woman dragged by the hair, and an unbridled horse is led away by the mane (fig. 35). As the horse is a Platonic symbol of sensuous passion or *libido*,[3] or of what Pico called *amore bestiale*, the fierce scenes of chastisement on the fountain of love show how animal passion must be chastened and bridled. Such violent scenes, conceived as a phase in the mysteries of love, were not uncommon in pagan rites of initiation; and the Renaissance may have known their representation in Roman mystery chambers, of which perhaps many more, and certainly others, were accessible then than are preserved at present.[4] But while the exact degree of a visual acquaintance with these secret traditions would be difficult to ascertain, the chief source was probably again of a literary nature. Both Ficino and Pico professed to know that in the pagan initiatory rites of love the first stage was a purge of the sensuous passion, a painful ritual of purification by which the

rises from the ground near her feet, while with her left hand she holds a vessel full of coins and gems.' To save the 'close resemblance' that has been discovered between this figure and Titian's, at least five of the attributes listed by Ripa would have to be disregarded. The same applies to *Felicità eterna* in relation to Titian's nude.

[1] On the symbolism of the rose, as a token of love, see C. Joret, *La rose dans l'antiquité et au moyen âge. Histoire, légendes et symbolisme* (1892). Also L.F. Benedetto, *Il 'Roman de la rose' e la letteratura italiana* (1910), pp. 9, 186, etc. A closer connexion with the *Roman de la rose*, which has occasionally been suspected in Titian's painting, I have been unable to detect. The nearest approach, in the Italian version by Durante, is the sonnet no. xvii (*Il fiore*, ed. F. Castets, Paris, 1881, p. 9) in which Venus admonishes *Bellacoglienza*, but this reference is as inconclusive as W. Friedländer's identification of the two figures ('La tintura delle rose', *Art Bulletin* XX, 1938, pp. 322 ff.) with Venus and Polia, the heroine of the *Hypnerotomachia*. Although the symbolism of the novel draws from the same sources as Titian's painting, he did not illustrate its incidents (see below, p. 125 note 7). Nor is the surmise that the closed vessel contains white roses (Friedländer, p. 324 note 16) any superior to the suggestion that it contains gems.

[2] Although the shape of the fountain resembles a sarcophagus and might thus recall the Italian custom of using ancient sarcophagi as fountains, Titian did not introduce in this instance any of those traces of fragmentation by which he generally characterizes a piece of sculpture or relief as antique (as for example in the socle of the Pesaro votive painting in the Antwerp Museum). Since all the figures and mouldings are intact, and the relief includes a Renaissance coat-of-arms, there is no justification for regarding the sculpture as 'ancient', and consequently any iconographic inferences drawn from that assumption ('a fountain of life made out of a tomb', 'originally destined to hold a corpse but now converted', etc.) are open to question. The subject of the reliefs in fact excludes a funerary significance.

[3] See Bocchi, Symbolon no. cxvii: 'Semper libidini imperat prudentia' (horsetamer); Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, fol. 34^{v}: 'Immoderatus impetus'. Derived from the horse of ἐπιθυμία in the *Phaedrus*, to which Petersen refers *op. cit.*, p. 187.

[4] The frescoes in the Villa Item, which seem relevant, are of course a very late discovery, but a like cycle, of which a sixteenth-century record survives in a sketchbook by Francisco d'Ollanda (Cod. Escor. 28–1–20, fols. 13 f.), existed in the Golden House of Nero; cf. F. Weege, 'Das Goldene Haus des Nero', *Jahrb. d. deutsch. archäol. Inst.* XXVIII, 1913, pp. 179 f., pl. 9. On the range of ancient fresco painting still preserved in the Renaissance and now lost, see Weege, 'Der malerische Schmuck von Raffaels Loggien in seinem Verhältnis zur Antike', in T. Hofmann, *Raffael als Architekt* IV (1911), pp. 140–203; Salis, *op. cit.*, pp. 203–7.

lover was prepared for his communion with the god.[1] It was surely as an allusion to these propitiatory ordeals, rather fully described in Apuleius, that symbols of chastisement were so frequently introduced by the Renaissance into an amorous context, as shown for example by the mysterious whip in Mantegna's Camera degli Sposi,[2] or by the emblematic figure of the 'tortured Cupid'.[3] For Ausonius the *Cupido cruciatus* was still a victim of revengeful passion, but on Renaissance medals, as in Petrarch,[4] he appears as a symbol of chastity, inscribed *Virginitas amoris frenum*, or *Virtuti ac formae pudicitia praeciosissimum*, or combined with an anagram addressed to the *Castitatis dea*.[5] 'La castità', writes Ripa in following Thomas Aquinas, 'è nome di virtù detta dalla castigatione', and represents Chastity swinging a scourge.[6] Unquestionably, the reliefs of chastisement on the fountain of love are to show how love is chastened.[7]

If the reliefs on the fountain thus demonstrate that animal passion has been exorcized, it would follow that the water in the fountain of love is pure, although it is gently agitated by Amor; and it follows further that the two women conversing at the fountain in the presence of the god are both representatives of a love above the 'profane', their dialogue rising to those *casti misteri amorosi di Platone* which allow for two forms of chastened love, *Amore celeste e umano*.[8] Human Love, while beautifully adorned, is

[1] Ficino, *Opera*, p. 1018: 'Quomodo purgetur animus'; also his commentary on *Enneads* VI, vii, 36: 'primus [gradus] est purgatio animi', *ibid.*, p. 1793. Pico, *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, pp. 112 ff.: 'Impuro, ut habent mysteria, purum attingere nefas.' On the relevant passages in Plato, Plotinus, Proclus, and Dionysius, see H. Koch, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen*, s.v. 'Reinigung', pp. 136, 144, 155, 174. Pico adopts Dionysius's sequence *purgari-illuminari-perfici*.

[2] See also the scourges in Mantegna's *Parnassus*.

[3] In Hellenistic gems and epigrams (*Anthol. Graec.* V, 195–9) Eros seems to undergo as many agonies as Psyche, both of them victims of the 'pains of love' —pains which the unsuccessful lover tries to 'pin' on the cool object of his passion by the use of poetic invocations or amulets. A famous late-antique love spell (Preisendanz, *Griechische Zauberpapyri* I, 1928, pp. 126–31: Bibl. Nat. suppl. gr. 574, fols. 20 f.; cf. Reitzenstein, *Das Märchen von Amor und Psyche*, p. 80) prescribes that a gem be engraved on one side with the tortures of Psyche imposed by Eros and Aphrodite, on the other with the group of Eros and Psyche embracing. The same contrast on Roman sarcophagi, where the agony of Love is identified with that of Death, cf. below, p. 135.

[4] Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p. 126 note 79; with further literature on the Hellenistic epigrams. Also 'Der gefesselte Eros', *Oud Holland* L (1933), pp. 193–217.

[5] Hill, nos. 992, 1011, 233–5.

[6] Ripa, s.v. 'Castità'.

[7] Hill, no. 1019, shows the chastisement of Love joined to the chastisement of Fortune; and it is not impossible that both these unbridled forces were to be tamed in the scenes on the fountain. The woman pulled by the flying forelock (near the left edge of the design) is more likely a Fortuna, who is supposed to be caught in just this way, than a nightmare-vision of Polia pulled by the hair (Friedländer, *loc. cit.*). The horse also has no immediate connexion with Polia's dream, whereas a *Fortuna a cavallo* is listed by Cartari, *Imagini*, s.v. 'Fortuna', as a Renaissance symbol of fugacious fortune. Verbally derived from the Roman *Fortuna equestris*, but only rarely used as an emblem of knighthood or noble fortune (see S. Béguin, 'A Lost Fresco of Niccolò dell' Abbate at Bologna in Honour of Julius III', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XVIII, 1955, pl. 32a), the *Fortuna a cavallo* chiefly suggested the *immoderatus impetus* of the Platonic horse (cf. Bocchi, symbolon no. cxvii), and thus changed into the *equus infoelicitatis* of the *Hypnerotomachia* (fols. b iiii^{v}–b v^{r}), a demonic horse throwing off *amoretti* who try to ride it. All these are fickle and uncontrolled powers, and Virtue chastises them as companions of an unchaste Amor. In the *Hypnerotomachia*, the chastisement of Adonis (with which Friedländer seeks to identify the scene on the right) is itself understood as a purification rite, *Adonia* being the atonement for *impura suavitas*, fols. z vi^{v} ff.

[8] See above, p. 119.

the more restrained of the two because she knows her adornments to be vicarious, whereas Celestial Love, who is unadorned, is the more passionate and ardent, holding in her hand a vase from which a flame is rising. Between the two, Amor is seen setting the water of the fountain into motion, an idyllic version of the 'spirit moving over the waters', which changes chastity into love.[1] As the movement of the group is from left to right, the three figures again illustrate the progression from *Pulchritudo* through *Amor* to *Voluptas*, with Amor playing his traditional part as a mediating or converting power. The theme of the picture is therefore exactly what the untutored eye has often suspected—an initiation of Beauty into Love.[2]

Since there is little chance that the popular title *Amore sacro e profano* will be abandoned very soon for the more just *Amore celeste e umano*, or the less attractive *Pulchritudo-Amor-Voluptas*, we should be grateful that it does at least retain the tone of a mystical initiation and allows that the two main figures represent an allegory rather than a myth. To call either or both of them by the name of Venus seems to me too positive; for although the theory of love which they embody was unquestionably associated with the two Venuses in Plato, 'one draped, the other nude',[3] it is important to observe that, in contradistinction to Botticelli and Mantegna, Titian endowed the figures with attributes and characters which transcend the mythological idiom. Neither the red cloak behind the nude figure, nor the flaming vase in her hand, nor the closed vessel held by the other figure, occur, to my knowledge, as attributes of Venus.[4]

The picture rather belongs to the same class as an allegory by Garofalo (fig. 36) in which the growth of love is pictured as a configuration of Amor, Pulchritudo, and Voluptas. In this painting Amor is represented by the presiding Cupid, Pulchritudo by the two lovers contemplating each other's beauty, and Voluptas by the pair who embrace.[5] It is evident, however, that the poetry inherent in the subject is heightened by Titian's more figurative mode of expression. If the poetical virtues of allegory required a defence, comparison of these two pictures might show how the more allegorical of the two is also the more poetical.

Perhaps because Titian's allegory is so economically contrived, despite the richness

[1] The importance of the action of Amor for the interpretation of the painting was first stressed in a lecture by O. Brendel. On 'the spirit moving over the waters' as *spiritus amoris*, see above, p. 113.

[2] Aldo de Rinaldis, *La Galleria Borghese*, p. 46: 'Si tratterebbe, ad ogni modo, di una scena di "persuasione all' amore"; e non v' è dubbio che questo titolo sarebbe il più appropriato al famosissimo quadro di Tiziano.'

[3] See above, p. 120 note 1.

[4] R. Freyhan, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XI (1948), p. 86, has pointed out that the flaming vase, as it appears in Titian, was in Christian iconography an attribute of Caritas signifying *amor dei*, although derived from the flaming torch held by Venus in mediaeval illustrations; but while this observation supports the association of Titian's figure with *amore celeste*, it seems to me to contradict her identification with Venus, since the attribute is clearly not a torch.

[5] The animals in the upper right, a lizard and a lamb, are surely meant as *imprese amorose*.

of the setting, it resembles a design of Roman style and didactic rigour, engraved by Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael (fig. 38). Mistakenly called *The Two Sibyls*, the engraving represents the muses of history and astronomy, *Clio and Urania*. Touched by the celestial music of the spheres, Urania has closed her book and appears to be seized with an ecstatic rapture, whereas Clio, bound to the earth, records the deeds to be remembered. The zodiacal signs of the Scales and the Scorpion, which appear to inspire the astral muse, are quoted as harbingers of death in Horace: *Seu Libra seu me Scorpios adspicit*,[1] and the same idea, in an earthly form, is probably also intended by the slab of stone on which Clio rests her foot. The picture thus represents a dual philosophy of death, by combining a quiet and careful remembrance on earth with an enthusiastic abandon at the thought of heaven. To sense a conformity of human deeds with the destiny written in the sky is a Stoical rather than a Platonic maxim; and the willing acceptance of the fateful sentence, as expressed in the concordance between the two muses, has more of the spirit of Stoical heroism than of the elusiveness of Plato. Yet the ecstatic joy expressed by Urania, whose posture is modelled after a Bacchante, is quite the opposite of Stoic apathy. Her enraptured attitude induced Achille Bocchi to reproduce her figure among his pedagogical symbols under the name and in the role of *felicitas*,[2] which was Ficino's synonym for divine Joy or *voluptas urania*.[3]

In the background of Titian's painting, the landscape is animated by little idyllic scenes which echo, or parody in the musical sense of the word, the theme of the *misteri amorosi*. A pair of rabbits, animals sacred to Venus (but not necessarily profane since they also attend the Madonna), relieve the heroic image of the castle on the left which is approached by a knight on horseback. In front of the lake, two riders with dogs are hunting a hare; a herd of sheep is guarded by a shepherd; and near the edge of the painting a pair of rustic lovers are engaged in a passionate embrace. These three episodes, so loosely juxtaposed as if they were freely improvised and unconnected, yet carry a suggestion of three phases of life which, if they were expressed in terms of Greek myth-

[1] *Carmina* II, 17. As astrological 'houses' *Libra* and *Scorpio* belong to Venus and Mars, whose combination again signifies *concordia discors*, that is, Harmony. See Plutarch and Pico as quoted above, pp. 82 ff.

[2] Bocchi, Symbolon no. cxxvii. He also introduced a man on the side of the left Muse, whom he redefined as *virtus*, so that the group resembles a feeble Hercules at the Crossroads. The title, however, reads *virtutis et felicitatis formula*, in which *felicitas* is the reward, not the opponent, of *virtus*.

[3] That Titian's picture was designed as a bridal gift is, on the face of it, not an unreasonable hypothesis, since Plotinus, and Ficino with him, regarded the 'passions of lovers' as an image or copy of the celestial ecstasy (as in the Catholic 'sacrament of marriage'). But since allusion to a marriage would require two coats of arms, not one, Petersen (*op. cit.*, p. 183) was justified in questioning the theory. The coat of arms on the fountain, reproduced and described in A. Venturi, *Il museo e la galleria Borghese*, pp. 103 f., appears to be that of Niccolò Aurelio (cf. A. L. Mayer, in *Art Bulletin* XXI, 1939, p. 89), or possibly of another member of his family.

ology, would be governed by three gods—Diana, the chaste huntress; Hermes, the shepherd; and Venus, the goddess of love. That the peaceful shepherd is placed in the centre, separating the hunters from the lovers, gives a sense of the benign protective power which mediates between passion and chastity. But although the theme of the foreground is thus restated in the language of a pastoral elegy, the argument is not stressed but rather made to evaporate. A poetic mood completely absorbs the philosophical construction, and a piece of landscape painting emerges, so remote in tone from the models of antiquity that it would seem to be the reverse of an ancient revival, although it was inspired by a Platonic mystery and served to heighten a dialogue. Titian reveals in this painting, to borrow a phrase applied by Reynolds to the Arcadian landscapes of Poussin, 'a mind naturalized in antiquity'.

CHAPTER X

AMOR AS A GOD OF DEATH

By one of those accidental conjunctions which Hegel might have ascribed to the cunning of history, the ancient monuments with which Renaissance Platonists were faced exactly suited their predisposition. Most of the objects were of a late date and lent themselves to a mystical reading, for with rare exceptions Greek art was inaccessible, and works of the classical period were virtually unknown. It is impossible to say, and hence futile to ask, what would have been the effect on minds steeped in the mysteries of Plotinus, had they encountered the pagan myths on Greek vases of the fifth century B.C., rather than on Roman sarcophagi. As the myths appeared to them in a sepulchral setting, it was only natural, and perhaps legitimate, to inquire into their secret meaning, and to read them not as simple tales but as allusions to the mysteries of death and after-life, conceived in Neoplatonic terms.

In 1529, when Michelangelo had temporarily abandoned work on the Medici Tombs, he designed for Alfonso d'Este a figure of *Leda*, which is preserved in several copies (fig. 3).[1] It is interesting to compare this painting with the statue of *Night* (fig. 5). That the two designs are variations of one theme is suggested not only by their formal resemblance but by the fact that they were derived from a common model, an ancient image of *Leda and the Swan* (fig. 4), which frequently recurs on Roman sarcophagi.[2] It is certain, therefore, that the theme of Leda was not introduced by Michelangelo as an afterthought; he had found it on the ancient sepulchre from which he took his idea for the *Night*. Nor was the association accidental. 'The name Leda', according to a curious

[1] The copy attributed to Rubens (fig. 3), on which see R. Oldenbourg, 'Rubens in Italien', *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen* XXXVII (1916), pp. 272 ff., is presumably closer to the tone of the original than the more elegant replicas in the Fontainebleau style, of which one ascribed to Rosso was formerly in the collection of Sir Joshua Reynolds, now in the National Gallery, London.

[2] A. Michaelis, 'Michelangelos Leda und ihr antikes Vorbild', *Strassburger Festgruss an Anton Springer* (1885), pp. 31 ff.; C. Robert, *Die antiken Sarkophag-Reliefs* II (1890), pp. 6–9. Our fig. 4, from a sixteenth-century codex of drawings in Coburg Castle (described by F. Matz, 'Über eine dem Herzog von Coburg-Gotha gehörige Sammlung alter Handzeichnungen nach Antiken', *Monatsberichte der Berliner Akademie*, 1871, p. 486, no. 150), is a detail from a Renaissance reconstruction of a Roman sarcophagus which combines twisted flutings with figured reliefs. Robert infers that the figured reliefs, while unquestionably ancient, did not originally belong to this piece, but were inserted by a Renaissance restorer acquainted with other Leda and Ganymede sarcophagi.

etymology encouraged by Plutarch, 'is generally associated with Leto and explained as the Night, the mother of luminary gods.'[1]

Although this verbal connexion is too superficial to explain the mysterious affinity between the two figures by Michelangelo, it shows that he interpreted the ancient sarcophagus in the literary spirit implanted in him by his early training; for he himself mentioned to Condivi that when he first studied the antiques in the Medici garden, he did so under humanist guidance. Politian, in particular, 'spurred him on in his studies, always explaining things to him and giving him subjects.'[2]

It could hardly have been otherwise. To secure correctness in copying these ancient images, or in reconstructing the missing parts, the Renaissance artist needed the advice of an antiquarian whose mind was formed by the study of ancient authors. A literary atmosphere thus enveloped the draughtsman who 'copied from the antique'. Literary knowledge, which he required to guide his eye, ended by dominating his mind, particularly as the literary records were so much better preserved than the visual. While in the recovery of plastic monuments a sense of ruins and fragments prevailed, the solid body of classical literature, however partially preserved or regained, offered a spectacle of incomparable splendour. Had the visual imagination been less vigorous and bold, the overwhelming presence of ancient letters might easily have enslaved it. But what in any weaker period would have produced obfuscation and fears, released in the Renaissance artist an inquisitive impulse which made him the most undismayed of explorers.

If trained in this spirit of exploration, an artist seeing the figure of *Leda and the Swan* on a Roman sarcophagus would not be satisfied just to copy the design. He would also inquire why it was that an amorous adventure of Jupiter should have been chosen to decorate a tomb. He could not fail to notice that the loves of the gods appeared on sarcophagi with remarkable frequency. The love of Bacchus for Ariadne, of Mars for Rhea, of Zeus for Ganymede, of Diana for Endymion—all these were variations of the same theme; the love of a god for a mortal. To die was to be loved by a god, and partake through him of eternal bliss. 'As there are many kinds of death,' a Renaissance humanist explained engagingly,[3] 'this one is the most highly approved and commended both by the sages of antiquity and by the authority of the Bible: when those . . . yearning for God and desiring to be conjoined with him (which cannot be achieved in this prison of the flesh) are carried away to heaven and freed from the body by a

[1] Roscher, *Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* II, ii, col. 1924: 'Der Name Leda wird gewöhnlich mit Leto zusammengestellt und erklärt als die Nacht, die Mutter von Lichtgöttern.' See also A. B. Cook, *Zeus* III, ii (1940), p. 1042 note 5.

[2] Ascanio Condivi, *Life of Michelangelo*, tr. Holroyd (1911), p. 12.

[3] Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, fol. 430^{r} (Appendix by Celio Agostino Curione).

death which is the profoundest sleep; in which manner Paul desired to die when he said: I long to be dissolved and be with Christ. This kind of death was named the kiss by the symbolic theologians [the *mors osculi* of the Cabbalists, for which Pico claimed to have found a parallel also among the Chaldeans],[1] of which Solomon also appears to have spoken when he said in the Song of Songs: *Osculetur me osculo oris sui.* And this was foreshadowed in the figure of Endymion, whom Diana kissed as he had fallen into the profoundest sleep. . . .'

While proposing to deal with the subject 'more fully in our Poetic Theology', Pico introduced already in the *Commento* a very long excursus on the *morte di bacio*, in which he associated the death of Alcestis, and even 'the kisses of Agathon', with the translation of Enoch, Abraham, and other patriarchs, and compared their tragic ecstasies to the Song of Songs.[2] With remarkably few omissions, the same arguments were repeated in Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'amore*,[3] in Celio Calcagnini's *Orationes*,[4] in Pierio Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica*, in Francesco Giorgio's *Harmonia mundi*,[5] in Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, in Bruno's *Eroici furori*,[6] etc. And invariably the 'most joyous and vital death' (*felicissima e vital morte*) was illustrated—as in the *Cortegiano's* hymn to Platonic love, where one would least expect it—by the 'raptured patriarchs' of the Old Testament: 'come gia morirono quegli antichi padri, l'anime dei quali tu [Amor] . . . rapisti dal corpo e congiungesti con Dio.'[7]

[1] *Conclusiones . . . de intelligentia dictorum Zoroastris et expositorum eius Chaldaeorum*, no. 7. For the text of the so-called Chaldean Oracles see Franciscus Patricius, *Zoroaster et eius 320 oracula chaldaica* (1591). Their Neoplatonic origin is discussed in W. Kroll, *De oraculis chaldaicis* (1894), their legendary ascription to Zoroaster in Bidez and Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés* (1938), I, pp. 158–63; II, pp. 251–262; also in Masai, *Pléthon et le Platonisme de Mistra*, p. 233 note 1.

[2] *Commento* III, viii (ed. Garin IV, iv, pp. 557 ff.): 'Through the first death, which is only a detachment of the soul from the body, . . . the lover may see the beloved celestial Venus . . . and by reflecting on her divine image, nourish his purified eyes with joy; but if he would possess her more closely . . . he must die the second death by which he is completely severed from the body. . . . And observe that the most perfect and intimate union the lover can have with the celestial beloved is called the union of the kiss . . . and because the learned Cabbalists declare that many of the ancient fathers died in such a spiritual rapture, you will find that, according to them, they died . . . the death of the kiss: which they say of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, [Elijah], and several others. . . . This is what our divine Solomon desired . . . in the Song of Songs. . . . This Plato signified by the kisses of his Agathon' (which refers not to the *Symposium* but to an epigram ascribed to Plato in Diogenes Laertius III, 32 and *Anthologia graeca* V, 78).

[3] *Op. cit.*, ed. Caramella, pp. 46 f.; tr. Friedeberg-Seeley and Barnes, pp. 49–51. In these passages the 'union and copulation with God Most High' is defined as a spiritual delight perfected in death: 'Hence some, that have achieved such conjunction in this life, could not continue in perpetual enjoyment thereof, because of the bonds of the flesh; . . . only, as they reached the limit of life, the soul in the embrace of God would abandon the body altogether, remaining in supreme bliss, conjoined with the Godhead.'

[4] 'Nam et in arcanis Hebraeorum legitur, Abraham, Aaron, Enoch, et Heliam atque alios qui ad caelestium rerum contemplationem ita rapti sunt, ut in se mortui, extra se viverent, non alia morte quam brasicae, id est osculi deperiisse. Ob id clamat Salomon in principio Canticorum, Osculetur me osculo oris sui.' *Opera aliquot*, p. 552.

[5] *Harmonia mundi* III, vi, 18; ed. cit. II, fol. 68r.

[6] '. . . quella morte d'amanti, che procede da somma gioia, chiamata da' cabalisti *mors osculi*'. *Eroici furori* II, i, 7: *mors et vita.*

[7] Castiglione, *Il cortegiano* IV, lxx (Cian).

Although based on the fantastic assumption that Hebrew sources could be used to elucidate the pagan mysteries of love,[1] the inference drawn in these arguments from the *mors osculi* of the Cabbala comes remarkably close to a modern opinion that the pagan mysteries culminated in a *hieros gamos*, an ecstatic union with the god which was experienced by the neophyte as an initiation into death.[2] 'And from this we may understand', wrote Pico in describing the *mirabili e secreti misterii amorosi*, 'with what mystery the story of Alcestis and Orpheus is endowed by Plato in the *Symposium*, . . . where we shall find a spiritual sense conforming to our explanation, by which both the meaning of Plato and the profundity of this matter will become perfectly apparent. . . . Alcestis did achieve the perfection of love because she wanted to go to the beloved through death; and dying through love, she was by the grace of the gods revived. . . . And Plato could not have suggested this more lightly or subtly than by the example he gave of Orpheus, of whom he says that, desiring to go and see the beloved Eurydice, he did not want to go there through death but, being softened and refined by his music, sought a way of going there alive, and for this reason, says Plato, he could not reach the true Eurydice, but beheld only a shadow or spectre. . . .'[3]

How widely the doctrine was accepted in the Medici circle is shown by Lorenzo de' Medici's commentary on his own sonnet sequence, in which he explained why, in

[1] Not without parallel in modern philology. R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (1927), pp. 34–8 ('Gottesbrautschaft'), also pp. 99–102, and pp. 245–52 ('Die Liebesvereinigung mit Gott'), observes on this subject a concordance between Plutarch (*Quaestiones conviviales* VIII, i, 3; *Vita Numae* 4) and Philo (*De cherubim* 42 ff.), also confirmed by Norden, *Die Geburt des Kindes*, p. 98: 'Es kann ja nicht auf Zufall beruhen, dass sich uns Zeugnisse Philons und Plutarchs zu einer Einheit ergänzten.'

[2] In a famous fragment (Stobaeus, *Florilegium* 120, 28, quoted by Cornford in *Classical Review* XVII, 1903, p. 439) Themistius refers to those initiatory rites (τελεταί) which 'in fact, as well as in name, resemble death (τελευτᾶν)'. On the ἱερὸς γάμος cf. Kern and Hopfner, 'Mysterien' in Pauly-Wissowa, *loc. cit.* Of earlier literature see Lobeck, *Aglaophamus* II (1829) pp. 609 f., 648–52 (still unsurpassed as a collection of sources); E. Petersen, 'Sepolcro scoperto sulla via Latina', *Annali dell' instituto di corrispondenza archeologica* XXXII (1860), pp. 392 f.; Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie* (1903), pp. 121–34 ('Die Liebesvereinigung des Menschen mit dem Gott'); Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903), pp. 535 ff.; O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte* (1906), I, p. 55; II, p. 1900 s.v. 'Ehe mit der Gottheit'. To what extent the subject has occupied recent scholarship may be seen from the following list, which is far from complete: E. Strong, *Apotheosis and After Life* (1915), pp. 202 f., 209, 276 note 31; R. Pettazzoni, *I misteri* (1924), p. 51; M. Rostovtzeff, *Mystic Italy* (1927), p. 46, bibliography pp. 159 f.; J. Carcopino, *La basilique pythagoricienne de la Porte Majeure* (1943), p. 121; W. K. Guthrie, *The Greeks and their Gods* (1950), pp. 53–64, 177; Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (3rd ed. 1951), pp. 17 f., 150. The complete absence of the theme from Cumont's chapter 'Les mystères' in *Lux perpetua*, pp. 235–74, and the less than passing reference to it in his *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains*, pp. 247 f., lead one to infer that, however much he otherwise agreed with Carcopino and Rostovtzeff, he preferred, on this particular point, to practice the *ars nesciendi*. A sceptical view also in M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* I (1941), pp. 110 ff., 627, and in Festugière, *L'idéal religieux des Grecs*, pp. 136 f., who inclines to reduce the ritual of hierogamy to a religious convention devoid of intense mystical emotions.

[3] *Commento, loc. cit.* (ed. Garin, pp. 554 f.). On Plato's version of the myth, *Symposium* 179D, see C. M. Bowra, 'Orpheus and Eurydice', *Classical Quarterly* II (1952), pp. 120 ff.

singing of love, he had started with a sonnet on death. 'He that examines these matters more closely,' he wrote, 'will find that the beginning of the *vita amorosa* proceeds from death, because whoever lives for love, first dies to everything else. And if love has in it a certain perfection, . . . it is impossible to arrive at that perfection without first dying with regard to the more imperfect things. This very rule was followed by Homer, Virgil and Dante: for Homer sent Ulysses into the Underworld, Virgil sent Aeneas, and Dante made himself wander through the Inferno, to show that the way to perfection is by this road (*che alla perfezione si va per queste vie*).' And because Orpheus did not really die (*non essere veramente morto*), he was 'debarred from the perfection of felicity', and unable to regain Eurydice.[1]

With the Platonic theory of love as the key to a philosophy of death, some of the funerary images on Roman sarcophagi seemed to reveal their secrets. The observation which in the eighteenth century so bitterly irritated Lessing—that the learned Klotz could mistake the winged genius of death for the god of love although he held his torch downward—would not have troubled these Renaissance humanists. They argued, perhaps not unjustly, that Thanatos and the funerary Eros were one, and that the image of Love was the Platonic and very poetical answer to the question 'wie die Alten den Tod gebildet'. And perhaps that answer might even offer a correction of some recent studies of Roman sepulchral art. No scholar has been more eloquent than Cumont in transcribing the symbolic mood of the winged funerary figures which flank the central panels of many Roman sarcophagi: 'ces figures d'Éros funéraires, qui, immobiles, les jambes croisées, et tristement appuyés sur leur flambeau renversé, . . . deviennent . . . une représentation allégorique de la mort'.[2] Yet when the love of Diana for the mortal Endymion is shown on the central panels of the same sarcophagi, Cumont interprets that image in a different sense. Intent on reducing funerary symbols to an astral topography of the Beyond,[3] he sees in the conjunction of Endymion with the goddess of

[1] *Opere, ed. cit.* I, pp. 24 f.

[2] *Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux mystères de Mithra* I (1899), p. 206; restated in *Symbolisme funéraire des Romains*, pp. 409 f., 444. Similar views in Petersen, 'Eros und Psyche oder Nike', *Römische Mitteilungen* XVI (1901), p. 59; Furtwängler, *La Collection Sabouroff* (1883–7) I, pp. 39, 49, 55; II, pp. 19 ff. etc.; also in Roscher I, 1370 ('Eros . . . bezeichnet den Tod als einen seligen'); Collignon, 'Eros funèbre', in Daremberg–Saglio I, pp. 1609 f.; Deonna, 'Eros jouant avec un masque de Silène', *Revue archéologique* 1916 (i), pp. 74–97. Is it accidental that in Philostratus, *Imagines* I, 2, the figure of Κῶμος ('Revelry') standing at the gate of a nuptial feast is described in the posture of a funerary Eros, slumbering though he stands, καθεύδων ὀρθός, holding his torch downward and crossing his legs? In picturing his dead son among the blessed, Himerius wrote: 'Above, playing with the gods, you perceive all things, jesting with Eros, revelling (κωμάζων) with Hymen. . . . (*Orationes* XXIII, 23; cf. Cumont, *Symbolisme funéraire*, p. 345). The association of Hymen with death also in Servius I, 651 (the model for *Hypnerotomachia*, fol. r iii^{r}). Nock, 'Sarcophagi and Symbolism', *op. cit.*, p. 160 note 81, quotes several passages from Artemidoros 'for the parallelism of marriage and death'.

[3] The general assumptions of Cumont's method are concisely stated in his two essays, 'Le mysticisme astral dans l'antiquité', *Bulletin de l'académie royale de Belgique*, classe des lettres (1909), pp. 256–286; and 'La théologie solaire du paganisme

the moon primarily a sign of the soul's location after death, 'la lune séjour des morts'.[1] The Endymion sarcophagi thus become a separate lunar class, unrelated to the cognate funerary types of Leda or Ganymede loved by Zeus, of Rhea loved by Mars, Psyche by Eros, and so forth. But since in all of these, however varied in their mythological connotations, Death appears as communion with a god through Love, it seems odd that this particular form of apotheosis, so completely in accord with third-century Neoplatonism, should be disregarded in Cumont's discussion of sarcophagi of that very period.[2]

For the immediate and 'faithful' pupils of Plotinus, susceptible though they were to *mysticisme astral*, cosmology remained one of the 'lesser spectacles', and not to be confused with the real destination of the soul. The meditations in *Enneads* I, vi, 8, on the voyage to the Beyond, leave no doubt that their author did not expect to travel through the spheres; he hoped to unite with the Godhead as 'one to one' (φυγὴ μόνου πρὸς μόνον). And because of the feigned simplicity of his writing, and his calculated use of traditional myths to circumscribe the experience of reunion with the Divine, his symbolism was inherently more poetic and flexible than any fixed dogma of 'lunar or luni-solar immortality'.[3] If some of the sarcophagi of his time seem to exhibit, as such products of a manufacturing industry inevitably would, a taste for the poetic commonplace,[4] this very fact would bring them closer to the *Enneads* than, say, to the *Chaldean Oracles*.[5]

Conversant with the idea of Eros as a power that loosens or breaks the chains which bind the soul to the body, the Renaissance antiquarians may also have had a more correct understanding of the *Eros funèbre* than some of the great archaeologists of the recent past who, like Collignon, Wiegand,[6] or Furtwängler, thought of Eros in a funerary context only as representing 'life after death', the 'joys of the blessed'. The Renaissance identified him with Death itself, in its painful no less than its joyous

romain', *Mémoires de l'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* XII (1913), pp. 447–79.

[1] *Symbolisme funéraire*, p. 249.

[2] K. Lehmann-Hartleben and E. C. Olson, in *Dionysiac Sarcophagi in Baltimore* (1942), p. 38 note 107, observe that 'the iconography of the sleeping Ariadne [approached by Dionysus] is certainly very closely related to that of Endymion [approached by Selene]: in at least one case, sarcophagi with these themes were used in a tomb as companion-pieces.' A strictly lunar theology could hardly account for that symmetry.

[3] Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

[4] It is on this point that Nock's critique is most relevant and salutary.

[5] On meditation as a subject of funerary art, see G. Rodenwaldt, 'Zur Kunstgeschichte der Jahre 220 bis 270', *Jahrb. d. deutsch. arch. Inst.* LI (1936), pp. 101–5; Marrou, Μουσικὸς ἀνήρ (Grenoble 1937) also Boyancé, *Le culte des Muses*, p. 2, where he argues, against Cumont, that the sarcophagi of the Muses need not be related to a spatial voyage through the astral spheres in order to yield a funerary meaning. The Muses suggest *per se* a sense of unison with the Divine. An extreme case of cosmographic reduction is Cumont's interpretation of the Marsyas sarcophagi, in which he sees not only, as the Renaissance did, an image of musico-religious catharsis, but a reference to the element of air, as the 'location' of the purgatory of impure souls, because Marsyas hangs from a tree while being flayed—*l'atmosphère séjour des âmes* (pp. 19, 147).

[6] Cf. 'Eros und Psyche auf einem Bronzerelief aus Amisos', *Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* I (1923), pp. 23–9. See also above, p. 133 note 2.

aspect, as shown so clearly on the Roman sarcophagi which represent the agonies inflicted on Psyche by Eros as a prelude to their final embrace.[1] A god of pain and sadness he remained,[2] but no persistent terror could be attached to Death if he appeared in the image of Amor:

—Natura insegna a noi temer la morte,
ma Amor poi mirabilmente face
suave a' suoi quel ch' è ad ogni altro amaro.[3]

The mood of this verse by Lorenzo de' Medici is that of the *dulce amarum*[4] or γλυκύπικρον ('bitter-sweet') which Ficino, apparently unaware that the phrase derives from Sappho,[5] introduced as a Platonic-Orphic term to define the equation of Love with Death: 'Love is called by Plato bitter (*res amara*), and not unjustly because death is inseparable from love (*quia moritur quisquis amat*). And Orpheus also called Love γλυκύπικρον, that is, *dulce amarum*, because love is a voluntary death. As death it is bitter, but being voluntary it is sweet. *Moritur autem quisquis amat. . . .*'[6] Or in Lorenzo's words: '. . . intendendo questa morte nella forma che abbiamo detto morire li amanti, quando tutti nella cosa amata si trasformono'.[7]

The assurance with which Ficino declared that 'Orpheus called Love γλυκύπικρον' is the more remarkable since Ficino is the only source for the attribution. Kern therefore, in his *Orphicorum fragmenta*, classed the passage among the *Spuria vel dubia*;[8] but in a more recent book on Orpheus it has been proposed that Ficino must have known an Orphic text now lost, and that Sappho's phrase therefore should be accepted on his authority as of Orphic descent.[9] However, this places too much confidence in

[1] Sarcophagus from Tarsus, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

[2] Perhaps no group of sarcophagi is more explicit in uniting the agonies of love and death than those representing the death of Penthesilea. F. Missonnier, 'Sur la signification funéraire du mythe d'Achille et Penthésilée', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* XLIX (1932), pp. 111–31, recognized clearly a *catégorie des monuments funéraires où l'amour est associé à la mort.*

[3] Lorenzo de' Medici, *ed. cit.* I, p. 87.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 90, 'la mistione sopradetta della amaritudine colla dolcezza'. Lorenzo Lotto's painting of Amor crowning a skull which rests on a cushion (Alnwick Castle, reproduced in B. Berenson, *Lorenzo Lotto*, 1956, pl. 156) illustrates the same argument. See also H. W. Janson, 'The Putto with the Death's Head', *Art Bulletin* XIX (1937), pp. 423–49, fig. 20, inscribed *Mortem non timeo.*

[5] Sappho, fr. 137 (Diehl), γλυκύπικρον, from Hephaestion (=Bergk fr. 40; Lobel-Page fr. 130). Although Hephaestion is quoted by Gyraldus as a source for Sappho (*De historia poetarum* ix, *Opera* II, 459), this particular fragment seems to have escaped his attention: for in discussing the union of pain and pleasure as an attribute of Eros, he quoted Alexander of Aphrodisias, Phornutus and Proclus as sources, but not Sappho (*Historia deorum gentilium*, syntagma xiii: 'Cupido', *Opera* I, 407). Nor is Sappho mentioned in Erasmus, *Adagia*, s.v. *dulce et amarum*, where the phrase is traced back only as far as Plautus. Since Erasmus, in collecting the *Adagia*, was assisted by the best humanists on both sides of the Alps, it would seem that Sappho's use of γλυκύπικρος was virtually unknown in the Renaissance, and its ultimate origin in doubt. Neither Erasmus nor Gyraldus seems to have accepted Ficino's derivation.

[6] *De amore* II, viii, *Opera*, p. 1327.

[7] *Op. cit.*, p. 139. But see also the bitter verses of Politian, *Rispetti spicciolati* xcv ff.

[8] *Op. cit.*, p. 344, fr. 361.

[9] Böhme, *Orpheus: Das Alter des Kitharoden* (1953), pp. 93 f.

Ficino. Since he regarded all Neoplatonic mysteries as derived from Orpheus, the presence of γλυκύπικρος in a Neoplatonic text would be sufficient for him to consider it Orphic. Now the intrusion of the term into Neoplatonic writings can be traced through at least two stages. Maximus of Tyre, in his discourse 'On the amatory art of Socrates', drew an explicit and lengthy parallel between the loves of Socrates and of Sappho, in which he remarked that if Socrates says that love flourishes in abundance and dies in want, 'Sappho conveys the same meaning when she calls love bitter-sweet (γλυκύπικρος) and a painful gift.'[1] The second stage is represented by Hermias's *Commentary on the Phaedrus*, 251D, which was one of Ficino's 'Orphic' sources. Here the transference of the Sapphic term to Socratic love was made without any mention of Sappho: ὅθεν γλυκύπικρόν τινες εἰρήκασι τὸν ἔρωτα.[2] It is almost certain that in this passage Ficino would take the anonymous τινες as a concealed reference to the Orphic initiates. Unfortunately Ficino's translation of the Orphic Hymns, although famous in its day, remained unpublished[3] except for a few extracts in his *Epistolarium*[4] and the *Theologia Platonica*;[5] but there can be no doubt that the cult of ambivalent love as defined by Sappho, and now proclaimed by Ficino as an Orphic tradition, had an influence on the 'bitter-sweet' style of Renaissance Petrarchists who regarded themselves as Platonic poets. Politian's *Orfeo* too would deserve to be re-examined in the light of the 'Orphic' revival; and the prevalence of that fashion might also be traced in Botticelli's bitter-sweet physiognomies: they seem to reflect the spectral amalgamation of Sappho, Plato, and Orpheus. In the *Hypnerotomachia*, where the precious diction is an extreme instance of the bitter-sweet style in literature, the Great Jupiter himself blesses Amor in these very words: σύ μοι γλυκύς τε καὶ πικρός,[6] 'you are sweet for me and bitter'. By the power of love the immortal gods acquire a semblance of mortality, and beloved mortals survive their death because they live 'entombed' in the hearts of their lovers:

Felix Polia quae sepulta vivis.

In later emblem literature, these sweet agonies of love appeared reduced to moral anecdotes, idylls, and epigrams. Alciati, for example, applied the title *Dulcia quandoque amara fieri* to Theocritus's story of Cupid stung by bees while tasting honey;[7] and under the title *De morte et amore* he introduced the fable of Love and Death exchanging

[1] *Philosophumena* XVIII, 9 (ed. Hobein, 1910, p. 232). Cf. Taylor's translation I (1804), p. 93.

[2] Hermias Alexandrinus, *In Platonis Phaedrum*, ed. P. Couvreur (1901), p. 185, line 11 (referring to *Phaedrus* 251D). Ficino's translation of Hermias was inaccessible to me.

[3] On an anonymous MS in the Laurenziana, Plut. 36, 35, which is attributed to Ficino in Bandini's catalogue (II, 240), see *Supplementum Ficinianum* II, pp. cxlii note 8, also *ibid.*, pp. 87 f.

[4] *Opera*, pp. 933 ff.

[5] XIII, ii (*Opera*, p. 294).

[6] Fol. l[1].

[7] *Emblemata*, no. 89.

their arrows, so that young people die and the old fall in love.[1] It would be difficult to decide whether these trivialities displaced, or merely disguised, the mysteries still preserved in their titles. 'Le lecteur . . . s'émerveille . . . d'une prétention qui place ces futilités sous le patronage du Sphinx',[2] but the mystification may also explain the popularity of Alciati, and was in any case regarded as essential to emblems.[3] In the opinion of Erasmus, who ordinarily inclined to be as impatient with obscurity as he was with platitudes, it was the charm of emblems (like his own *Terminus*) that they suggested a thought by withholding it.[4] And Politian, who solved the ancient *aenigmata* of Varro and Ausonius,[5] included in the list of his 'little employments' (*occupatiunculae*), the invention of cryptic symbols for lovers, which would be understood by the lovers only, and 'exercise in vain the conjectures of others' (*caeterorum frustra coniecturas exerceat*).[6]

As Michelangelo grew up in the Medicean circle among the Orphic poets of the *dulce amarum*, and was guided in his early studies by Politian himself, it is remarkable how completely his *terribilità* was able to divest the 'bitter-sweet' mysteries of their gentleness. In part that may be due to a change of scale. The heroic proportions to which he enlarged the image of Leda (fig. 3), would invariably dispel the lyricism of a myth which was so beautifully rendered by Spenser[7] and which Goethe admired as the most amiable of scenes, *die lieblichste von allen Szenen.*[8] The gloom of death which the idyllic image on the sarcophagus was designed to lighten (fig. 4), seems now condensed into a euphoric stupor.

Without removing the image from its sepulchral context, Michelangelo could not have produced such a ruthless picture. Conversely, when he retained the figure for a

[1] *Ibid.*, no. 65.

[2] Seznec, *La survivance des dieux antiques*, p. 94.

[3] Emblems belong to the kind of learned game so well described by A. Delatte, *Etudes sur la littérature pythagoricienne* (1915), p. 112: 'ces jeux savants où la part de la niaiserie et du mensonge est égale à celle des bonnes intentions et qui transforment des légendes délicieusement humaines en récits stupides, honnêtes et édifiants'. On the avowed ambition of emblem writers to dispense the ancient mysteries, see M. Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery* I (1939), pp. 25, 50 f., 53 f., 159, etc.; also G. Boas in *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo* (1950), p. 36. One of Jacob Cats's emblem books bears the title *Silenus Alcibiadis, sive Proteus* (1618), which he explains in the preface, fol. i iv^{v} ff.

[4] '. . . in huiusmodi symbolis captari etiam obscuritatis aliquid quod coniecturas intuentium exerceat.' And again: '. . . quod geminam haberet gratiam; alteram ex allusione ad priscam ac celebrem historiam, alteram ex obscuritate quae symbolis est peculiaris.' Letter to Alfonso Valdes, 1 August 1528, *Epistolae, ed. cit.*, no. 2018.

[5] *Miscellanea* xxxvi, xxxix; *Epistolae* VII, i (*Opera* I, fol. 59^{v}).

[6] *Epistolae* II, xi (*ibid.*, fol. 19^{r}). Averse to obscurantism though he was, Politian in the preface to his translation of Plato's *Charmides* (of which only a fragment has survived) praised the transmission of philosophical knowledge in the cryptic form of fables and riddles 'ne religiosa quodammodo Eleusinarum dearum mysteria profanarentur' (*Opera* I, fol. 123^{r}). A surprisingly extreme statement for one more attuned to the formula *ex elegantia voluptas* than to the prescriptions of Iamblichus, *De vita pythagorica* xvii, 75.

[7] *Faerie Queene* III, xi, 32.; cf. D. Bush, *Classical Influences in Renaissance Literature* (1952), p. 45.

[8] *Faust* II, Act ii, Scene 2 (repeated in Scene 4). Goethe's description of the scene as a woodland idyll, with bathers frightened away by swans, recalls Correggio's *Leda*, acquired in 1755 by Frederick the Great.

tomb, he transformed the Leda into an allegory of Night. Thus the funerary symbolism and the pagan myth, which he had found combined on the Roman sarcophagus, were polarized by him into two separate images, of which each rètained some of the traits of the other, although the attributes and the meaning were changed. In the place of the swan, the *Night* has an owl, curiously lodged below the angle of her knee, and she rests on a mask and a bundle of poppies, symbols of Death and Sleep, the ancient twin-brothers who were children of Night.[1] She no longer represents death as the embrace of a god but on the contrary bemoans, as one of four gigantic *pleureurs*, the destructive powers of Time, of which she is a part. She belongs, therefore, to the realm of flux and change, from which the dead man has risen, leaving her below to bewail the loss.[2]

In view of this transformation it might be argued that, however significant for Michelangelo's method of working, the association of Night and Leda is irrelevant to the works themselves. Rather than juxtapose the *Leda* to the *Night*, we should study the *Night* in the context of the Medici Chapel and consider the *Leda* as a separate work, designed for a Ferrarese patron of neo-pagan tastes. Unquestionably, this should be the primary approach, and there is no obligation to go beyond it. Aesthetically the two works are separate, and it is a form of antiquarian curiosity to look at them together. Yet the question remains whether Michelangelo himself did not intend to arouse this curiosity. As both works became widely known, and were not produced without that intention, Michelangelo must have counted on their resemblance being observed. No one seeing the *Leda* could help thinking of the *Night*, and wondering what Michelangelo had intended. The use of such closely related forms for incompatible purposes might appeal to his admirers as a *tour de force*, or it might offend his critics as a sign of parsimony (which was one of the accusations levelled against Michelangelo by the Venetians, who found his inventions forceful, strained, and repetitious). But as long as the astonishment did not penetrate below the surface, the designs were not understood for what they were: variations of one symbolic theme. In poetic theology, Leda and Night were one, and their figures represented two aspects of a theory of death in which sorrow and joy coincide.[3]

[1] The Latin word for mask is *larva*, which also suggests death in its fearful aspect (skeleton, ghost, shadow); cf. Deonna, 'Eros jouant avec un masque de Silène', *op. cit.*; Jacob Cats, *Proteus* (1658), p. 557: *mors larvae similis*; F. Altheim, 'Maske und Totenkult', *Terra mater* (1931), pp. 48–65. In Horapollo, *Hieroglyphica* (1551), p. 223, the word *Manes* is rendered by a mask (our fig. 64). Concerning Sleep and Death as children of Night, see Pausanias V, xviii, 1. The poetic tradition—*Iliad* XIV, 231; XVI, 454, 672, etc.; Hesiod, *Theogony* 211 f., 759; *Orphic Hymns* LXXXV, 8—is discussed and illustrated by Robert, *Thanatos* (1879), pp. 6 ff. For the Renaissance view cf. Gyraldus, *Opera* I, 60, 310 f.

[2] This is how Michelangelo himself described the programme, C. Frey, *Die Dichtungen des Michelagniolo Buonarroti* (1897), p. 14, no. xvii.

[3] Did Baudelaire know both designs? In 'L'idéal', *Les fleurs du mal* I, xviii, he pictured Michelangelo's *Night* in the attitude of Leda: '. . . toi, grande Nuit, fille de Michel-Ange, / Qui tors paisiblement dans

AMOR AS A GOD OF DEATH

Although Leonardo's famous design of Leda,[1] conceived in the style of a joyful idyll, does not prepare us for the gloom on which Michelangelo insisted, the presence in it of the four children of Leda—Castor, Pollux, Helen and Clytemnestra, issuing pairwise from the eggs (fig. 6)—would seem to confirm an ambivalent interpretation of the theme: *concordia* represented by Castor and Pollux, *discordia* by Helen and Clytemnestra.[2] As they break through the shells, the two amiable and the two obstreperous infants appear as antithetical twins.[3] The *Hypnerotomachia* illustrates the same 'mystery of Leda' by showing a flame issuing from one egg, two stars from the other (fig. 8).[4] Calcagnini, transcribing a passage from Pliny's *Natural History*, refers to Castor and Pollux as the twin stars who dispel the dire threats embodied in their sister Helen.[5]

une pose étrange / Tes appas façonnés aux bouches des Titans!' It is well, however, to dissociate the Renaissance equation of love with death from the similar mysteries in Wagner or Rilke or Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, since these have passed through the denser mists of German romanticism. In *Resignation*, Schiller's vision of death was still the same as Lessing's: 'Der stille Gott—o weinet, meine Brüder— / Der stille Gott taucht meine Fackel nieder, / Und die Erscheinung flieht.' But when he wrote *Die Götter Griechenlands*, he attached the image to a didactic *Liebestod*. The precipitation of these developments by Creuzer and Schelling, both of them steeped in Neoplatonism, is perhaps less surprising than Schopenhauer's 'patient' reading of Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus and Iamblichus, on which he reports in *Parerga und Paralipomena* I, ii, §7; also II, xviii, §203. As for Nietzsche, despite his professed anti-Platonism, he was literally on the trails of Pico's *Conclusiones . . . de intelligentia dictorum Zoroastris*, no. 6, 'de duplici ebriatione', when he wrote *Das trunkene Lied*; that is, he did not revive the Persian Zarathustra, but only the *mage hellénisé*. The song begins with a praise of darkness ('Was spricht die tiefe Mitternacht? . . . Die Welt ist tief, und tiefer als der Tag gedacht') and ends with what Pico, in *Heptaplus* V, i, called *voluptas, qua nulla maior, qua nulla verior, nulla est permanentior*: 'alle Lust will Ewigkeit.'

[1] The copies at Wilton House and in the Spiridon Collection, Rome (fig. 6), correspond to Cassiano del Pozzo's description of the lost original, which he saw in 1625; cf. Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci* (1939), pp. 123 ff.

[2] 'And I recall', wrote Yeats in *A Vision* (1937), pp. 67 f. (see also pp. 51, 267 f.), 'that Love and War came from the eggs of Leda.' Remarkable for its mythographic accuracy, Yeats's idea of Leda was sustained by Neoplatonic readings casually listed by him pp. 19 f. In the poem *Leda*, Helen and Clytemnestra are engendered first ('. . . the burning roof and tower / And Agamemnon dead'), while the conception of the demigods is left in doubt ('Did she put on his knowledge with his power / Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?'). For the variant adopted in *A Vision*, p. 51, where Castor is combined with Clytemnestra, and Pollux with Helen, see Gyraldus, 'Castores vel Dioscuri', *Historia deorum gentilium*, syntagma v, *Opera* I, 184 ff., where several variants are listed.

[3] If the union of Discord and Concord, as the Orphic-Neoplatonic 'principle of generation', is implied in the mystery of Leda, then the theme is, like the figure of the swan, essentially musical, which might explain the iconographic affinity between Leonardo's *Leda* and Filippino Lippi's *Allegory of Music*. It would also account, in Correggio's *Leda*, for the presence of Amor and *putti* as musicians, playing the lyre and flute and thus offsetting the turmoil of the bathers frightened by swans.

[4] Fols. k vi^{r}–vii^{v}. Our illustrations (figs. 7 and 8) are taken from the French edition, 1546.

[5] 'Equitatio', *Opera*, p. 571, after Pliny II, xxxvii; see also Perotti, *Cornucopiae*, s.v. 'gratum nautis', and Gyraldus, *De re nautica*, in *Opera* I, 618. Navigation is again the subject of the cryptic oracle about the eggs of Leda in the *Hypnerotomachia* (our fig. 8); 'To the one the sea is pleasing [Helen], the other is pleasing to the sea [Dioscuri].' In the plan of the novel, the story of Leda belongs to a sequence of four theogamies which represent the Four Elements subject to the *physizoa Venere* (fol. m vii^{r}); namely, Europa and the Bull (Earth), Leda and the Swan (Water), Danae and the golden rain falling from the Sky (Air), and Semele consumed by Fire. On the rare adjective *physizoos*, which occurs in Greek poetry only five times, and of which the two most famous instances refer to the Dioscuri (*Iliad* III, 243; *Odyssey* XI, 301), while a third, in the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite 125, introduces her ἱερὸς γάμος with Anchises, see Gilbert Murray, 'What English Poetry may still learn from

The legend that only three of Leda's children came from Jupiter, Clytemnestra being a daughter of Tyndareus,[1] does not apply to Leonardo's design, which (except for the copy in the Borghese Gallery) shows all four as cygnet-homuncles. But Michelangelo seems to have preferred the other version. There is little doubt that the children of Leda figured in his original design. Condivi described it as 'Leda and the Swan, and near by the egg from which Castor and Pollux were born, as is fabled by ancient writers',[2] but his recollection may have been incomplete; for if we trust the contemporary engraving made in Italy by Cornelis Bos, which has strong marks of authenticity,[3] two eggs appeared in Michelangelo's painting: one broken, with a pair of twins issuing from it, the other still intact but transparent, showing the outline of a dormant infant, Helen.[4]

In representing an Orphic mystery, it was permitted to add a touch of the bizarre. Plato had set the example for it by admitting Aristophanes among the allegorists of Love. 'These and many other things', Ficino explained in his commentary on Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium*, 'Aristophanes tells in a form resembling monsters and portents, behind which, as behind a veil, divine mysteries are meant to be hidden. For it was the custom of ancient theologians to protect their sacred and pure arcana by hedges of metaphor (*figurarum umbraculis*) in order to prevent them from being defiled by the profane and impure.'[5] The eggs of Leda belong to that genre of sacred *drôlerie*, for which Aristophanes had created the classical model in the 'Orphic' cosmogony of the *Birds:*

Of Darkness an egg, from the whirlwind conceived,
was laid by the sable-plumed Night,
And out of that egg, as the Seasons revolved,
sprang Love, the entrancing, the bright.[6]

Phanes-Eros, first-born of Night, is hailed as 'egg-born' (ὠογενής) in the Orphic Hymns,[7] and of a 'double nature' (διφυής).

Greek', in *Essays and Studies* by members of The English Association III (1912), pp. 8 ff.; T. F. Higham and C. M. Bowra, *The Oxford Book of Greek Verse in Translation* (1953), p. xlii. The authors of the *Hypnerotomachia* used the word exactly in the sense here defined.

[1] Cf. Gyraldus, 'Castores vel Dioscuri', *Opera* I, 186.

[2] *Op. cit.*, tr. Holroyd, p. 53.

[3] Reproduced in C. de Tolnay, *Michelangelo* III (1948), fig. 279. Bos worked in Rome during Michelangelo's lifetime.

[4] The inscription on the engraving, unrecorded in Tolnay but given by H. Thode, *Michelangelo: Kritische Untersuchungen über seine Werke* II (1908), p. 321, explicitly mentions Castor and Pollux as issuing from one egg, Helen from the other: *Ex illo gemini Pollux cum Castore fratres, / Ex isto erumpens Helene pulcherrima prodit.*

[5] *De amore* IV, ii, *Opera*, p. 1331.

[6] 695 f., tr. B. B. Rogers. It is interesting that the memorable attack by Wilamowitz on Orphism in the Classical Age stopped short of the theogony parodied by Aristophanes, *Glaube der Hellenen* II, p. 193, with reference in note 2. See also Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (1935), pp. 92 ff. The only author definitely committed to the contrary view seems to be H. W. Thomas, 'Επέκεινα, pp. 43 f.

[7] *Hymn to Protogonos*. On Phanes-Eros see now K. Preisendanz in Pauly-Wissowa XIX (1938), 1761–74; for the Renaissance view, Gyraldus I, 409, with references to Orpheus, Hermias, Lactantius, Macrobius. Drawings ascribed to Perino del Vaga and to Peruzzi (Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege*, p. 9 note 2, fig. 9) suggest that the ancient relief of Phanes in Modena (*ibid.*, fig. 8) was known and understood in the sixteenth century. The two halves of the cosmic egg, which, in the Modena relief, is split apart by the apparition of Phanes, represent the celestial and the subterranean 'hemispheres' which were identified with the caps or *pilei* worn by Castor and Pollux; see Cumont, *Symbolisme funéraire*, pp. 68–73, with texts. A curiously corrupted version, perhaps a deliberate travesty (?), in Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, fol. 294^{v}, s.v. *forma pilei*, where, on the authority of a jest in Lucian's *Dispas* about 'sufficient covering for a man's head', the ovoid shape of the *pileus* is derived from the halving of an ostrich egg—an object unrelated to the Dioscuri but occupying a curious place in Christian iconography (M. Meiss, '*Ovum Struthionis*, Symbol and Allusion in Piero della Francesca's Montefeltro Altarpiece', *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Greene*, pp. 92–101). Inevitably, the idea of egg-born deities became a target for Renaissance jests. Gyraldus cites the 'speciosa interpretatio' of one of his friends that amphitheatres were built in an oval shape because Pollux, the god of pugilists, was egg-born (*Opera* I, 184 f.).

CHAPTER XI

THE FLAYING OF MARSYAS

While Michelangelo made a cult of melancholy, Raphael, himself of a melancholy complexion,[1] was opposed to the school of night. His friend Calcagnini, in an *Encomium umbrae*,[2] introduced the parable of a man who felt threatened by his shadow because this dark attendant persistently followed his steps, mimicked his gestures, withdrew when he approached, but never left him. As he feared that the sly pursuer would kill him, he consulted an oracle and received the advice: *Cole perspicua*, study clarity. The parable fits the genius of Raphael. In approaching the gloomy mystery of Marsyas, he attacked the subject with a passionate lucidity and freed it from its inherent obliqueness. The fresco of *Apollo and Marsyas* in the Stanza della Segnatura (fig. 2) transforms a gruesome tale into a Socratic metaphor.

His model was again a Roman sarcophagus, perhaps the very fragment which was copied also by a less intelligent artist (fig. 1).[3] Whether or not the model, now lost,[4] was quite so mediocre as it looks in this perfunctory drawing, it surely had nothing of the verve and economy which Raphael gave to the design. The crowning of Apollo and the flaying of Marsyas appear on the sarcophagus as two separate episodes. On the left, the crown is proffered by a winged Victory, with a contemplative river god at her feet;[5] on the right, two henchmen turn their backs to her while they attend to the torture of Marsyas. In Raphael's painting the double action of torturing and crowning is carried out by one pair of ephebes, remarkably alike in type. Their heads, both wreathed with ivy, which is a plant sacred to Dionysus, are so closely juxtaposed that, as agents of glory and agony, they appear to be inspired by one common com-

[1] On Raphael's melancholy, see V. Golzio, *Raffaello nei documenti* (1936), p. 97, no. 10.

[2] 'Ne quis se a sua umbra vinci sinat', *Opera*, p. 325.

[3] An early eighteenth-century drawing from the collection bequeathed by Richard Topham to Eton College in 1736 (Bm I 55); by an unimaginative draughtsman. The instrument in Apollo's hand is not restored as a lyre, and the knife of one of the executioners is rendered like a twig.

[4] The fragment belonged at one time to the Villa Borghese, where it was seen by Jacopo Manilli (*Villa Borghese*, 1650, pp. 42 f.) and Domenico Montelatici (*Villa Borghese*, 1700, p. 161). Cf. Robert, *Die antiken Sarkophag-Reliefs* III, ii (1904), p. 249, no. 199.

[5] In the drawing the river god has been mistaken for a shepherd, see Robert, *loc. cit.*

mand, which issues from Apollo. Marsyas is made to face the god. The insipid corpse which on the sarcophagus was frontally attached to the tree, has been changed into a living figure, drawn in profile from another antique.[1] His limbs firmly stretched as on a rack, the knife of the flayer touching his chest, Marsyas awaits his 'living death' which, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, makes him cry out to Apollo: Why do you tear me from myself? *Quid me mihi detrahis?*[2]

Readers of Plato who studied the *Symposium* as a secret compendium of mysteries, would remember that, in the drunken speech of Alcibiades, Socrates himself was called a Marsyas, and that this dubious appellation followed immediately after his description as a 'Silenus figure', in which he was compared to a deceptive contraption in statuary shops which shows outwardly the face of an ugly man, but, when opened, proves to be full of gods.[3] Like Silenus, Marsyas was a follower of Bacchus, and his flute was the Bacchic instrument for arousing the dark and uncontrollable passions which conflict with the purity of Apollo's lyre. The musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas was therefore concerned with the relative powers of Dionysian darkness and Apollonian clarity; and if the contest ended with the flaying of Marsyas, it was because flaying was itself a Dionysian rite, a tragic ordeal of purification by which the ugliness of the outward man was thrown off and the beauty of his inward self revealed. That Socrates, who was a disciple of Apollo and had adopted from an inscription on Apollo's temple at Delphi his own maxim 'Know thyself', should be figuratively described as a Silenus and a Marsyas, meant that his ruthless pursuit of bewildering questions was but the disguise of an inward clarity—a disguise which was indispensable because it reckoned with the twofold nature of man. To bring out the hidden clarity in others, whose souls were covered and confused by their bodies, required a cathartic method, a Dionysian ordeal by which the 'terrestrial Marsyas' is tortured so that the 'heavenly Apollo' may be crowned. 'If you consort with singers and harpists, you may trust your ears', wrote Pico ironically, 'but when you go to philosophers', whose proper style is *Silenorum nostri Alcibiadis*, 'you must withdraw from the senses, you must return into yourself (*redeas ad te ipsum*), you must penetrate into the depths of your

[1] Raphael's figure corresponds almost literally to a profile view of the famous statue of Marsyas (Capitoline Museum, and others); but a similar figure appears also as the corner-piece of some Marsyas sarcophagi, Robert, *op. cit.*, pp. 247 ff., no. 198 (Louvre); Cumont, *Symbolisme funéraire*, pl. I.

[2] *Metamorphoses* VI, 385.

[3] Cf. Erasmus, *Adagia*, s.v. *Sileni Alcibiadis*: 'Haec nimirum est natura rerum vere honestarum: quod habent eximium, id in intimis recondunt abduntque; quod contemptissimum, id prima specie prae se gerunt, ac thesaurum ceu vili cortice dissimulant, nec prophanis ostendunt oculis.' Erasmus infers that not only Socrates, Diogenes, and Epictetus, but also Christ and the Apostles, the Holy Scripture, and the very Sacraments of the Christian Church, reveal, if properly understood, a Silenus-nature, whereas the official administrators of these mysteries are too often 'inverted Sileni', *praeposteri Sileni*, outwardly rich and inwardly poor.

soul and the recesses of your mind, you must acquire the ears of the Tyanean (*Tyanei aures*)[1] with which, because he was no longer in his body, he heard not the terrestrial Marsyas but the heavenly Apollo who on his divine lyre, with ineffable modes, tuned the melodies of the spheres.'[2]

The cry: 'Why do you tear me from myself?' expresses then an agonized ecstasy and could be turned, as it was by Dante, into a prayer addressed to Apollo: 'Enter my breast, and so infuse me with your spirit as you did Marsyas when you tore him from the cover of his limbs.'

O buono Apollo, all' ultimo lavoro
Fammi del tuo valor sì fatto vaso,
Come domandi a dar l'amato alloro.
Infino a qui l'un giogo di Parnaso
Assai mi fu, ma or con ambedue
M' è uopo entrar nell' aringo rimaso.
Entra nel petto mio, e spira tue
Sì come quando Marsia traesti
Della vagina delle membra sue.[3]

To obtain the 'beloved laurel' of Apollo, the poet must pass through the agony of Marsyas. The words of Lorenzo de' Medici apply also here: 'The way to perfection is by this road.'

As Raphael's painting of the Flaying of Marsyas is placed in the corner between the *Parnassus* and the *Disputa*, it is flanked on either side by the figure of Dante, who appears in the *Disputa* among the followers of St Thomas and St Bonaventura, and in the *Parnassus* in the company of Homer and Virgil. In the entire cycle of the Stanza della Segnatura, Dante is the only author represented twice: and since his two portraits appear at the corner in which Theology and Poetry are joined, it is only consistent that the picture in that corner is an example of Poetic Theology, representing a mystery of the pagans with which Dante opened the first Canto of the *Paradiso*.

In explaining some of the Bacchic mysteries in *De hominis dignitate*, Pico suggested that inspiration by Apollo always requires in us the dismemberment of Osiris, whom he identified with Bacchus ('Nunc unum quasi Osirim in multitudinem vi titanica discerpentes descendemus, nunc multitudinem quasi Osiridis membra in unum vi Phoebea

[1] The 'Tyanean' is Apollonius of Tyana, whose philosophical warning against pleasing sounds is recounted in Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii Tyanei* V, xl. See the commentary on Pico's passage by Franciscus Sylvius, in *Opera Politiani* I (1519), fol. 77^{v}.

[2] *Opera*, p. 354. Letter to Ermolao Barbaro, cf. above, p. 18 note 4.

[3] *Paradiso* I, 13–21.

colligentes ascendemus').[1] 'These two powers residing in our souls, by one of which we are raised to heaven while the other throws us into hell,' are like Empedocles' 'strife and friendship, or war and peace', which persistently divide and harmonize the universe. The cruelty inflicted on Marsyas by Apollo, while he himself is crowned the victor in their contest, therefore expresses the supreme sense of disproportion by which the god attacks the human frame, which is agonized as it succumbs to the divine ecstasy. 'Let us be driven,' Pico concluded in his reflections on the Bacchic mysteries,[2] 'let us be driven by the Socratic furors, which so may place us outside of our minds, that they will place our minds and ourselves in God.'—'Quis talibus sacris initiari non appetat? . . . Quis Socraticis illis furoribus . . . afflari non velit . . . ?' The words recall the Virgilian *numine afflatur* which is inscribed over Raphael's *Parnassus*. In Virgil these words—*adflata est numine*[3]—express the frenzy of the Sibyl as she becomes possessed by the approaching god, whom she tries vainly to shake off from her anguished breast:

> *At Phoebi nondum patiens, immanis in antro*
> *Bacchatur vates, magnum si pectore possit*
> *Excussisse deum; tanto magis ille fatigat*
> *Os rabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premendo.*[4]

The torture of the mortal by the god who inspires him, was a central theme in the revival of ancient mysteries, its illustration in *Apollo and Marsyas* being only one of many variations. Its most elaborate development was in the story of Amor and Psyche, in which the ordeals suffered by Psyche to regain Amor were understood as stages of a mystical initiation. Her descent to the Orcus and the Styx, so that she might rise to heaven, again confirmed and illustrated Lorenzo's moral: 'The way to perfection is by this road.' Had the scenes in the lunettes of the Farnesina cycle survived, we would know how Raphael pictured the sombre ritual, which is the necessary counterpart to the Olympian mood of the ceiling.[5] Yet even within the celestial zone, the

[1] *De hominis dignitate* (ed. Garin, p. 116). On the identification of Osiris with Bacchus cf. Herodotus II, 48; Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 28 (*Moralia* 362B); Servius, *In Georgica* I, 166; Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, fol. 234r. Pinturicchio's painting *The Dismemberment of Osiris*, in the Sala de' Santi of the Borgia Apartments, is discussed, with reference to Pico, by D. R. de Campos, *Itinerario pittorico dei Musei Vaticani* (1949), p. 49. Alexander VI who, it may be noted, revoked the indictment of Pico in 1493, had in Annius of Viterbo a mentor in Egyptian mysteries, on whom see Giehlow, 'Die Hieroglyphenkunde des Humanismus', *op. cit.*, pp. 44–6.

[2] *De hominis dignitate* (ed Garin., p. 122).

[3] *Aeneid* VI, 50.

[4] *Ibid.*, 77–80.

[5] An attempted reconstruction of the lower sequence in Salis, *Antike und Renaissance*, p. 200. See also G. Hoogewerff, 'Raffaello nella Villa Farnesina', *Capitolium* XX (1945), pp. 9–15, with reference to an important set of engravings based on Raphael's lost designs (Bartsch XV, 'Maître au Dé', nos. 39–70). It is a mistake, however, to assume that the lower scenes would have extended below the nine lunettes now disguised with painted windows. Like the cycles of Amor and Psyche in the Castel Sant' Angelo in Rome and in the Palazzo Doria in Genoa, which are so clearly derived from the Far-

division between a trial and a triumph of Love is illustrated in the centre by the two large pictures, the tribunal of the gods preceding the marriage feast. And also the surrounding spandrels are divided into two sets: six scenes of divine anger and complaint, which entail mortal trials for Psyche, are followed by four scenes of divine acceptance and rejoicing which signify Psyche's ascension.[1] So richly and variedly is the dual theme developed, and so well disguised in a humorous Apuleian style, that one hardly becomes aware that this exuberant cycle unfolds the same duality of triumph and agony which Raphael epitomized in *Apollo and Marsyas*.

When Shaftesbury wrote 'that Wit and Humour are corroborative of Religion', he may not have thought of the gods of the Farnesina. Their humour is perhaps more frivolous than he would have thought proper, and their underlying seriousness too grim for his irony. But the Renaissance mystagogues cultivated a combination of gloom and banter. The comic mask of the fluting Silenus, which must be opened to reveal the perfection of the gods, represented the same mystery as Marsyas flayed. The final note of the *Symposium* was that tragic and comic catharsis are one. Dionysus, the dispenser of copious joy, is himself the god of tragic frenzy.

nesina, Raphael's cycle must have ended above the wall itself. This is also confirmed by the documents (Golzio, *op. cit.*, p. 65), which speak only of a decoration of the ceiling ('volta'), a term extending, as we know from the Sistine Ceiling, down to the lunettes, but not further.

[1] The architectural disposition of the loggia was utilized to bring out the contrast; for while the six episodes of divine displeasure, accompanied by Psyche's trials below, occupy the pendentives between the lunettes, the scenes of triumph and apotheosis appear between the open arcades.

CHAPTER XII

BACCHIC MYSTERY BY MICHELANGELO

Among the more confusing achievements of Michelangelo's youth was his consummate forgery of a Sleeping Cupid, which was exhibited in Rome as a genuine antique. The work, now lost, which was successively owned by Cesare Borgia, Guidobaldo of Urbino, and Isabella d'Este, is supposed to have aroused the interest of Cardinal Riario: for he invited the young virtuoso to visit Rome.

That Michelangelo was attached in Rome to Riario's household is made certain by his correspondence; but it has caused surprise that during this period he should have made a *Bacchus* for Jacopo Galli and a *Pietà* for the Cardinal de Villiers, whereas he received no major commission from Riario himself. Perhaps Riario considered him still an apprentice. From a complimentary poem by Antonio Flaminio it appears that Riario entertained in his Roman palace, which was filled with antiques, a school for artists similar to the school of the Medici in Florence.[1] Here Michelangelo continued to study from the antique, and that may well have been the real purpose of Riario's invitation. As is shown by the style of the LIBERALITAS on his medal, Riario had a taste for the pseudo-antique (fig. 42), which he shared with Pontano, Sannazaro, and other academicians whom he befriended (fig. 41).[2]

A pseudo-antique statue was also the first work Michelangelo produced under these auspices in Rome. The *Bacchus* he made for the garden of Jacopo Galli, a friend of Riario and his immediate neighbour,[3] has not met with much favour from poetical

[1] M. Vattasso, 'Antonio Flaminio e le principali poesie dell' autografo Vaticano 2870', *Studi e testi* I (1900), p. 51, no. xxxii: *Pictor ad card. S. Georgii, in cuius aedibus picturam didicit.* On Riario's collection, see Lanciani, *op. cit.* I, p. 94.

[2] Like the Ciceronian letters exchanged between academicians, these medals show a neo-classical style not confined to one locality. The attempt to attribute them all to one artist, Adriano Fiorentino, whose travels would account for their wide and thin distribution, has not been entirely successful. Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals* I, p. 83.

[3] The Casa Galli adjoined the palace of Riario (*Cancelleria*): 'ad angulum posteriorem huius palatii', Boissard, *Topographia romanae urbis* II (1627), p. 18. On the extent of the grounds belonging to the Galli and the presumable location of their palace and garden see C. Hülsen and H. Egger, *Die römischen Skizzenbücher von Marten van Heemskerck* I (1913), pp. 39 f.; cf. also P. Romano, *Roma nelle sue strade e nelle sue piazze*, n.d., p. 222; B. Blasi, *Stradario romano* (1933), p. 132. According to R. Rufini, *Dizzionario etimologico storico delle strade, piazze, borghi e vicoli della città di Roma* (1847), pp. 86 f., the

critics (fig. 74). Shelley found that the figure is 'abundantly inharmonious', 'has an expression of dissoluteness the most revolting', and is altogether a 'mistake of the spirit and meaning of Bacchus'. Holroyd, lenient among adverse critics, felt that this 'ugly, but marvellously finished statue' inspired a mixture of admiration and discomfort: 'The finish and the truth to nature of the unpleasant youth are exquisite.'

That the posture was meant to suggest a precarious balance, which is apt to attend a state of inebriation, surely does not contradict the divine nature of Bacchus. The *ratio causae*, Pico explained, presupposes in a deity the *ratio perfecti*,[1] so that a god is always filled with the powers he dispenses. Apollo could not convey the gift of music if he were not himself inspired by music, nor would Venus inspire love, were she not moved by love.[2] It follows that for Bacchus to convey drunkenness, he must be drunk. And yet, though Michelangelo's logic was impeccable, the criticism of the statue is more justified than its defenders have admitted: for it can be shown, I believe, that the awkward and heavy shape of the cup, which gives to the gesture a patent vulgarity, is a clumsy restoration.

It would be difficult to imagine Michelangelo patiently cutting into the surface of the cup the series of insipid rosettes which serve as its decoration, or his modelling the two realistic handles that stick out at unfortunate angles while the cup is precariously held with a lifted thumb and two fingers. It is also curious that although the statue is composed in the round, as befits a garden figure, the approach from the left offers a ridiculous aspect because the face here vanishes behind the cup. The restorer's work is marked by two breaks, one of which runs straight through the wrist, the other through the thumb and forefinger. The original state, if it may be so called, is preserved in several drawings of the sixteenth century, which show the statue without the right hand (figs. 72, 73).

Of these drawings, the most important is by Heemskerck, the Flemish admirer of Michelangelo, who visited Rome in 1532–5, that is, during Michelangelo's lifetime.[3] He made a sketch of the statue in its original place, the garden of the Casa Galli, where it then stood as a semi-classical ruin, surrounded by genuine antiques in a ruinous

Galli assisted Riario in financing the construction of his new palace. Its location in the immediate vicinity of the Casa Galli is confirmed also by Ulisse Aldrovandi, 'Delle statue antiche che per tutta Roma in diversi luoghi e case si veggono', appended to Lucio Mauro, *Le antichità della città di Roma* (1558), p. 167.

[1] *Conclusiones . . . in doctrinam Platonis*, no. 4.

[2] In Plato's *Symposium* 196E, Agathon says of Eros that he is 'the source of poetry in others, which he could not be if he were not himself a poet'. Cf. Plotinus about Venus (*Enneads* III, v, 2): καὶ ἐρασθεῖσα Ἔρωτα ἐγέννησε, *et Amorem amando genuit* (Ficino's translation). Another example of the same principle is Raphael's Apollo, the inspirer of music, who appears in the *Parnassus* as inspired by music. Archaeological notes for 'diese Bildung des seiner selbst vollen Gottes' in Petersen,' Eros und Psyche oder Nike', *op. cit.*, p. 59.

[3] Hülsen and Egger, *loc. cit.*

state (fig. 73). Another drawing made some twenty years later for an Englishman in Rome (1551–2),[1] shows that the statue had by that time been restored unsuccessfully, for there is a peg in the stump of the right arm (fig. 72). No reproduction or description of the statue with the hand and cup has been found that can be dated before 1551–2, when this unsuccessful restoration had already been made. While it is not impossible that Michelangelo himself was asked on his return to Rome in 1535 to restore the hand, it is very unlikely that, having broken off again by 1551–2, the remaining fragment or group of fragments would have survived the transport from the Casa Galli to the Villa Madama and from there to Florence in 1572. A drawing inscribed 'in the house of Madama without Rome' shows the statue in the same ruinous condition, with the peg sticking out of the right arm.[2]

It cannot be seriously questioned, therefore, that the *Bacchus* is in a disfigured condition.[3] That he originally did hold a cup appears to me certain, but the workmanship was surely more fluent, and the hand was probably bent in the wrist, as was Michelangelo's custom; which would also explain why it broke in the wrist so easily.[4] But more conclusive and revealing than any of these inferences is the direct evidence contained in Heemskerck's drawing that the statue was regarded as pseudo-antique. The drawing shows that, in Michelangelo's own lifetime, the owners of the statue were content to let it stand in their garden as a classical ruin, and that it was so recorded by one of Michelangelo's admirers. By the middle of the century, still during Michel-

[1] Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R 17, 3, fol. 14 (M. R. James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge* II, 1901, no. 989). For the date, see P. G. Hübner, *Le statue di Roma* (1912), pp. 59 f., as against Michaelis, '*Römische* Skizzenbücher nordischer Künstler des XVI. Jahrhunderts', *Jahrb. d. deutsch. archäol. Inst.* VII (1892), p. 95, no. 14.

[2] Michaelis, *op. cit.*, p. 98, no. 54: 'in the hous of madama we thowt rom [i.e. without Rome]'. The drawing shows the statue in profile and is therefore independent of the drawing in our fig. 72. It is stuck into the same sketch book on fol. 54. I am indebted to Dr. A. Scharf, who called my attention to this sketchbook many years ago when I first suggested that the hand was restored.

[3] Tolnay, *Michelangelo* I (1943), p. 142, observes that the hand and cup 'are of the same marble as the figure and *seem to be* by Michelangelo himself' (italics mine). From so critical an author one might have expected a commitment whether the workmanship is Michelangelo's or not. The words 'the same marble' are also ambiguous since they can either mean 'the same kind of marble', which would not prove anything, or 'the same piece of marble', which would be decisive. Tolnay's description of the condition of the statue, although very long, is incomplete: the second break in the hand is not mentioned, nor are any of the other injuries listed, for example in the nose and the tail of the Satyr, in the ivy leaves of Bacchus, etc. The two sixteenth-century drawings after the Bacchus in the Cambridge Sketchbook are confused by Tolnay with each other and treated as one, the inscription 'in the hous of madama . . .', which belongs to fol. 54, being falsely referred to the drawing on fol. 14. The important fact that the Bacchus is represented in both these drawings without a hand and with a peg in the stump of the arm, is altogether omitted. The carelessness in Tolnay's report on the Cambridge Sketchbook is matched in vol. III by repeated confusions between Cod. Pighianus and Cod. Coburgensis with reference to the *Leda*. Hence it is not made clear that Tolnay's fig. 250 (= Jahn, *op. cit.*, no. 156) is a copy of his fig. 281 (= Matz, *op. cit.*, no. 150). The latter, from Cod. Coburgensis, is misnamed throughout Cod. Pighianus.

[4] In some of the small bronze copies of the *Bacchus* made in the sixteenth century, the hand holding the cup is bent (for example, Tolnay's fig. 172), while in others (his fig. 171) the cup is raised as high as the head. Tolnay does not consider their difference.

angelo's life, this curious condition had already occasioned a legend which was inscribed on the sketch of fig. 72: 'Scoltur de michelangeli the which was buried in the grownd and fo[u]nd for antick.' Boissard, a few years later, embellished the legend by a further detail. Supposedly to confound Raphael, 'Buonarroti made . . . this Bacchus out of ancient marble, and from the finished statue he broke off an arm, which he kept . . . and he had the work buried in the grounds of a certain citizen, who was soon to build a house on it. And when in the following year the statue was found by those who were laying the foundation of the house, . . . it was greatly praised', particularly by Raphael (who, incidentally, was not yet in Rome). Michelangelo then produced the missing piece and proved his authorship.[1] From the point of view of a Roman or Florentine *cicerone*, the story could not have been better invented. It not only explained why the right arm was fractured and repaired, but it also proved the authenticity of the restoration. Inadvertently it also recalled an undeniable fact; namely, that the statue had existed for some time without a hand.

While it would not be wise to accept any of these tales uncritically, they deserve attention for the spirit in which they were told, particularly as they represent a type of story which was repeatedly fastened on Michelangelo. That he was able to 'prepare' a statue 'as one from whom no craft was hidden, so that it looked as if it had been made many years ago', was confidently asserted by his pupil Condivi, who intended it for a compliment;[2] and the praise was extended by Vasari to the forgery of old drawings, in which he extolled Michelangelo's proficiency.[3] The pleasure the Renaissance took in this kind of make-believe was too intense to be restrained by a scrupulous conscience. Moral doubts were thrown only on the character of the merchant who had paid Michelangelo too little for the Sleeping Cupid which was to be passed off for antique. The artist's own part was not plain fraud but emulation. He desired to compete with the silent masters, and if he could imitate them to the point of deception, it

[1] Boissard, *loc. cit.*—In the first part of his Treatise on Painting, completed in 1548, Francisco d'Ollanda, who knew Michelangelo personally, told a similar story. He claimed that the *Bacchus* (which he actually remembered so badly that he described the satyr as carrying a basket on his back) was shown to him in Rome as an ancient sculpture but that he recognized it as not antique 'although the colouring of the marble and all the details of execution seemed to suggest it. . . . The master learned that he had not deceived me.' *Francisco de Hollanda, Vier Gespräche über die Malerei, geführt zu Rom 1538*, ed. J. de Vasconcellos (1899), pp. 193 f.

[2] Condivi, *Life of Michelangelo*, tr. Holroyd, p. 18.

[3] Vasari, *Life of Michelangelo*: 'He also forged [*contraffece*] sheets by the hands of various old masters [*maestri vecchi*] with such similitude that no one recognized it; for he tinged and aged them with smoke and various other means, and so dirtied them that they looked old [*che elle parevano vecchie*] and, when compared with the originals, they could not be distinguished from them: and he did this so that, by giving his copies, he might retain the originals for himself, which he admired for the excellency of their art and tried to surpass by his own: by which he acquired a great name.' The enthusiastic spirit of Renaissance forgers was stressed by Louis Courajod, *L'imitation et la contrefaçon des objets d'art antiques aux XV et XVI siècles* (1889). Also F. von Bezold, *Aus Mittelalter und Renaissance* (1918), p. 119, with reference to the literary forgeries of Celtes, Trithemius and Annius of Viterbo.

proved that he fully understood their craft. In this respect, Michelangelo's pseudo-antique sculpture is the exact parallel to certain literary performances which, while removed from the temptations of the market place, aimed at a similar deception. No greater compliment could be paid to Bembo than to mistake one of his Latin epigrams for ancient. Alberti's comedy *Philodoxus* passed for a genuine Latin work, and a number of false Lucians also seem to have issued from his pen.

To understand the passionate tone of the Renaissance debates *De imitatione*,[1] one must abandon the common prejudice that imitation is always a cold and uninspired performance, and hence incompatible with a creative spirit. Burckhardt, himself a neo-classical poet, observed that intense admiration, an overpowering sense of another's superiority, invariably engenders imitation. Under an irresistible and quite irrational impulse the enthusiastic admirer turns into a mime. The phenomenon is known in daily life by the ludicrous behaviour of devoted disciples who acquire the mannerisms of their master, repeating his intonation, his gestures, even his gait. These are but the travesties of an imaginative power of self-transformation which can be refined to a religious discipline, as was shown for example by the Franciscans. In vowing to imitate their founder, because St Francis himself had imitated Christ, they demonstrated how a spiritual communion can be established on a persistent practice of devout imitation. Machiavelli, who was not prejudiced in favour of monks, explained that 'for a sect or a commonwealth to last long, it must often be drawn back to its beginning', and he observed that 'the need for that kind of renovation is shown by the example of our religion, which would have been utterly extinguished, had it not been drawn back to its beginning by St Francis and St Dominic. . . . By returning to the example of the life of Christ, they re-established religion in the minds of men. . . . And it is this renovation which has maintained religion, and still maintains it.' The passage occurs in the *Discourses on Livy*[2], and serves as a parallel to political attempts at reviving the ancestral Roman virtues.

A like discipline was required to revive the Bacchic mysteries of Plato. These rites were distinguished by their convivial nature, in which the furor of the god was disguised by irony. For combining a Bacchic with a Socratic spirit, the *Symposium* of Plato and the Bacchic passages in the *Phaedrus* were the venerated ancient models. An accomplished imitation of this genre, a dialogue by Sadoleto entitled *Phaedrus*,

[1] The camps were sharply divided between the purists and those favouring, or tolerating, a composite style, as shown by the controversies between Politian and Paolo Cortese, Giovanni Pico and Ermolao Barbaro, Gianfrancesco Pico and Bembo, Erasmus and Longueil or Navagero, etc. Castiglione sympathized with the Erasmian view in the *Cortegiano*, but sided with Navagero when he was in Spain. Michelangelo, from his first visit to Rome, clearly belonged to the intransigent party, Raphael to the eclectic.

[2] III, i.

is located in the suburban Roman villa of Jacopo Galli, and gives a picture of the kind of conviviality in which the owner of Michelangelo's *Bacchus* took part as host and chief interlocutor.[1] The role of Phaedrus was here played by Tommaso Inghirami, whose nickname Fedro, originally derived from a performance of Phaedra, was turned into a compliment to his oratorical gifts. With an abundance of pointed illustration, the new Phaedrus was pictured as dismissing philosophy as useless and extolling the glories of rhetoric in its place, while his amused but unconvinced opponents compared him to the sophist Gorgias. In a second dialogue, Sadoleto himself took up the case for philosophy and argued it out against the animadversions of Phaedrus. Needless to say, philosophy was saved,[2] but Sadoleto was too elegant and gracious a writer not to allow the jests of Phaedrus to conclude the feast. Against the background of some very solemn reflections, a ruthless gaiety was allowed to prevail and provided the pleasures of what Gyraldus called *rhetoricae ludicrae exercitatio*, a form of oratory for which the classical example was again the drunken speech of Alcibiades.

Some of the demonic Alcibiadic spirit may be detected in the expression of Michelangelo's *Bacchus* (fig. 76), admirably described by the innocent Condivi, who even revealed, in a singularly childish passage, that he had been made aware of some tragic mystery which he was unable to fathom. 'This work in form and bearing in every part corresponds to the description of the ancient writers—his aspect, merry; the eyes, squinting and lascivious, like those of people excessively given to the love of wine. He holds a cup in his right hand, like one about to drink, and looks at it lovingly, taking pleasure in the liquor of which he was the inventor; for this reason he is crowned with a garland of vine leaves. On his left arm he has a tiger's skin, the animal dedicated to him, as one that delights in grapes; and the skin was represented rather than the animal, as Michelangelo desired to signify that he who allows his senses to be overcome by the appetite for that fruit, and the liquor pressed from it, ultimately loses his life. . . .'[3]

Errors of description in Condivi are so frequent that, although he is supposed to have written under Michelangelo's direct supervision, it is impossible to trust him on any detail. But compared to the blunders he committed in other instances,[4] the errors about the *Bacchus* are slight. The leaves in the hair, although intertwined with grapes, are ivy, and the flayed animal does not look like a tiger but rather like a *leopardus*, a

[1] Sadoleto, *Opera omnia* III (1738), pp. 128–79. The villa was located 'in campo feniculario secundum Adriani molem' (*ibid.*, p. 131), that is, near the Castel S. Angelo. The dialogue opens showing Inghirami in conversation with Jacopo Galli: 'cum ipso Gallo sermocinantem'.

[2] 'De laudibus philosophiae', *ibid.*, pp. 179–244.

[3] Condivi, *op. cit.*, pp. 20 f.

[4] The *Madonna of Bruges* he described as a bronze, the *Sacrifice of Noah* in the Sistine Ceiling as a *Sacrifice of Cain and Abel*, the diadem of *Leah* he mistook for a mirror (which, if represented at all, would have belonged to *Rachel*), and the *Moses* at San Pietro in Vincoli he remembered as 'supporting his chin with his left hand, like one tired and full of cares.'

fabulous beast described by Pliny as a hybrid between lion and panther.[1] That Condivi saw the *Bacchus* holding a cup is possible because the first restoration antedates the publication of his book (1553); but implicit faith should not be placed in his statement since Aldrovandi, who saw the statue about the same time, did not mention the cup in his detailed description.[2]

And yet, whatever Condivi's minor errors, one senses his proximity to the master whom he adulated and to whom he endeared himself by his simplicity. In contradistinction to Vasari, who posed as a man of letters, Condivi was never baffled by Michelangelo's cryptic manner. Ambiguous remarks were accepted by him without any of that sense of frustration which Vasari revealed in an unguarded moment: 'E stato nel suo dire molto coperto ed ambiguo, avendo le cose sue quasi due sensi.'[3] When Condivi asked, for example, why Michelangelo had represented the Virgin in the *Pietà* of St Peter's as younger than Christ, Michelangelo, instead of giving the theological reason, which can be gathered from the sermons of Bernardino da Siena,[4] replied with a grim joke at the expense of old spinsters which Condivi understood to be a new contribution to morals and theology. On the *Bacchus* Condivi seems to have been favoured with an equally suitable remark. One can hear this determined young Boswell asking what the skin of the flayed animal signified, and receiving the kind of answer which he bravely recorded: Do you not know that people who drink too much die?

In any case, the flayed animal signified death, and as we saw in the Flaying of Marsyas, that kind of death is associated with Bacchus. The god offering the cup of rejoicing introduces a ritual of cruel destruction, and his twofold gift is illustrated in the figure of the little satyr. While he 'furtively enjoys', as Condivi says, the grapes which are enveloped in the flayed skin, he is so placed that the skin and head of the tortured animal emerge between his own goat feet (fig. 75). Half-human, half-animal, he himself willingly holds and supports the horrid symbol of agony because in it is laid the fruit of rejoicing which he smilingly touches with his lips. As the mysteries of Bacchus are both destructive and consoling, because he conveys the power to draw life out of death, he fittingly presides over a garden of ruins, the desolate site of enthusiasm.

* * * * *

It has been asked how it was possible that the young Michelangelo, professedly a believer in Savonarola, could produce, at the very height of Savonarola's influence,

[1] Pliny, *Natural History* VIII, xvi.

[2] 'Delle statue antiche', *op. cit.*, p. 168; written in 1550, cf. Hülsen, 'Römische Antikengärten des XVI. Jahrhunderts', in *Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie*, philos.-histor. Klasse XIII, iv (1917), p. viii.

[3] First edition of the *Vite* (1550), p. 989; cf. E. Steinmann, *Michelangelo im Spiegel seiner Zeit* (1930), p. 11 note 2.

[4] Cf. Mâle, *L'art religieux de la fin du moyen âge* (1922), p. 128.

an undisguisedly pagan statue of Bacchus. A full answer to this question would require a more detailed analysis than can be attempted here of Savonarola's critique of the pagan revival.[1] It may suffice, however, to observe that while he attacked a literal-minded, popular, worldly paganism, Savonarola himself was so profoundly affected by the mystical Platonism of Ficino and Pico that there are demonstrable traces of it in his writing. The dialogue *De veritate prophetica* not only starts out in a pseudo-Socratic tone of doubt, and introduces, in the names of the interlocutors, some of the Hebrew acrostics that were so dear to Pico, but the pleasing setting of the conversation is copied from Plato himself: the inspiring plane tree at the bank of the Ilissus, under which Socrates invites Phaedrus to sit, reappears as a plane tree on the outskirts of Florence.

Exactly how far, within a mystical context, Savonarola would favour the imitation of pagan models was perhaps too nice a question for the young Michelangelo to ponder, particularly while he was working for Roman patrons who were politically not on Savonarola's side. Riario was cardinal-protector of the Augustinian order, and on close terms with its general, Fra Mariano da Genazzano, who was Savonarola's powerful and very vocal opponent. In their circle, which was also Jacopo Galli's, an Augustinian revival of Christian mysticism was combined with a formal cult of Cicero and Virgil. It is important, for an understanding of Michelangelo's Roman style, to picture him in that neo-classic atmosphere, whose peculiarly Roman mood (reflected in the epigrams of the *Coryciana*) was so markedly different from the Florentine. Egidio da Viterbo referred with pride to his Roman friends of Sant' Agostino when he claimed that while in other ages piety was combined with an unpolished manner, and elegance tended to be impious, it was the distinction of his own age that it knew how to be pious and elegant in one: 'ut denique summae pietati summam elegantiam copulaverit'.[2] The fact that Michelangelo produced the *Pietà* of St Peter's almost simultaneously with the *Bacchus*, and again under the sponsorship of Jacopo Galli,[3] proves that neither he nor his patrons felt any difficulty in shifting from pagan to Christian poetry, or from devout to elegant modes of speech.

Nor did Michelangelo abandon in his later years, despite the growth of a more narrow and contracted piety, his relish for the Bacchic mysteries he had learned in his

[1] The legend of Savonarola's hostility to art has been disproved by G. Gruyer, *Les illustrations des écrits de Jérôme Savonarole*, 1879. On the misinterpretation of the 'burning of the vanities', merely a variant of the 'burning of Carnival', see Villari, *Life and Times of Savonarola* III, vi.

[2] *Historia viginti saeculorum*, MS Angel. 502 fols. 197^{v}–198^{r}.

[3] The contract for the *Pietà* (cf. *Le lettere di Michelangelo Buonarroti, coi ricordi ed i contratti artistici*, ed. G. Milanesi, 1875, p. 614) includes the following pledge to the Cardinal de Villiers: 'And I, Jacopo Galli, promise to His most Reverend Lordship, that the said Michelangelo shall execute the said work in a year, and that it shall be the most beautiful work of marble in Rome, and that no master living could do it so well' (tr. C. Heath Wilson, *Michelangelo*, 1876, p. 570).

youth. The Dionysian ritual of flaying recurs in a love poem, addressed presumably to Cavalieri. The *morta spoglia* or the *irsuta pelle* are to be shed by the lover and offered to the beloved, as a trophy of passion, sacrifice and transformation, a token of renewal through death:

Così volesse al mie signior mie fato
Vestir suo viva di mie morta spoglia,
Che, come serpe al sasso si discoglia,
Pur per morte potria cangiar mie stato.
O fussi sol la mie l'irsuta pelle,
Che del suo pel contesta, fa tal gonna,
Che con ventura stringe sì bel seno. . . .[1]

An ostensibly Christian form was given to this symbol in the St Bartholomew of the *Last Judgment*. The 'flayed apostle' (*lo Apostolo scorticato*) lifts threateningly the knife with which he was martyred, while in his left hand he holds the gruesome skin on which Michelangelo painted an agonized self-portrait (fig. 77).[2] As in Dante, of whom Michelangelo was known to be a profound expounder, the Marsyas-like portrait is a prayer for redemption, that through the agony of death the ugliness of the outward man might be thrown off and the inward man resurrected pure, having shed the *morta spoglia*.[3]

This was one of those 'secrets' in the *Last Judgment* which filled Pietro Aretino with dismay. 'If Michelangelo desires that his pictures be understood only by the few and learned, I must leave them alone since I do not belong to these.'[4] Actually, he understood them to perfection. In a letter of 1538 addressed to Vittoria Colonna he declined to accept her noble advice that he confine his writing to his religious tracts which she had found immensely edifying. 'I admit', he answered mockingly, 'that I render myself less useful to the world, and less acceptable to Christ, by producing trifles rather than true works; but of every evil the cause is in the pleasure of others, and in my indigence: for if the piety of the princes were as great as my penury, I would write nothing but *Misereres*.'[5] To illustrate his point he chose St Lawrence and St Bartholomew, the two most prominent saints symmetrically placed in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, and compared them to what he conceived to be their pagan counterparts. The princes, he claimed, would rather see Hercules burning on his

[1] Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 55, no. LXVI.
[2] First observed by Francesco La Cava, *Il volto di Michelangelo scoperto nel Giudizio Finale*, 1925.
[3] See above, p. 144.
[4] Lodovico Dolce, *L'Aretino ovvero Dialogo della pittura*, ed. C. Teoli (1863), p. 51.
[5] *Il secondo libro de le lettere di M. Pietro Aretino*, Paris (1609), fol. 9r.

funeral pyre than St Lawrence roasting on his grill; and to the sight of 'the flayed apostle' they would prefer 'Marsyas without skin': *Marsia senza pelle.*[1]

Whatever the personal aspects of Aretino's enmity, no critic has been more penetrating than he in defining the nature and limitations of Michelangelo's art. Animated by a hatred of obscurantism in any form, he detected in Michelangelo's cult of the enigmatic a detestable spirit of evasion. While Michelangelo professed to have turned away from the pagans, and to have become as *chietino* as Vittoria Colonna herself, his work was still of pagan inspiration, and his imagery pagan in disguise. It was the disguise that Pietro Aretino was determined to expose. He himself had advocated a new freedom of letters, of which he had made an uninhibited use; but with a purism not incompatible with a licentious spirit, he did not believe in the mixing of genres. Like the princes he preferred his Marsyas plain.

This master of the bizarre could be relied upon to detect a bizarrerie in others. His correspondence with Michelangelo, in which he displayed his peculiar art of resolving flattery into caricature, shows Michelangelo's own skill in Aretino's idiom. We hear much about Michelangelo's sombreness and depth, but too little is said about his grim sense of humour and his genius for the grotesque. The sonnet about shedding his skin, for example, is only half understood if it is read solely as a tragic expression of passion and longing, which it unquestionably is. But these emotions are rendered by a preposterous image which is meant to strike the reader as grotesque. And surely, there is also an ingredient of bizarrerie in his picturing San Baccio (=Bartolommeo) as a Bacchic saint, his portentous skin inscribed with the tragic mask of the artist.

Fabrini: I hear it said that in the design of his stupendous Last Judgment there are some allegorical senses of great profundity which are understood only by a few.

Aretino: In this he would deserve praise because it would appear that he had imitated those great philosophers who concealed under the veil of poetry the deepest philosophical mysteries both human and divine so that they might not be understood by the vulgar: not wishing, as it were, to throw pearls before swine. And this I would also believe was Michelangelo's intention. . . . [Yet] to me it does not seem so very praiseworthy that the eyes of children, matrons and maids should openly see in these figures the improprieties which they exhibit, and only the learned understand the profundity of the allegories which they conceal.[2]

[1] It would be tempting to regard the date of this letter as a *terminus ante quem* for the completion of Michelangelo's cartoons. But while that inference is not contradicted by any of the available evidence, it should be taken into account that the presence of St Lawrence and St Bartholomew in a prominent place was prescribed by the dedication of the Chapel (see Wind, *Gazette des beaux-arts* XXVI, p. 223 note 32).

[2] *L'Aretino*, pp. 50 f.

It would be difficult to deny that this criticism strikes at a basic paradox of cryptic art, which frequently addresses itself to the very audience from which it professes to be hidden.[1] And yet, the aim to combine a didactic with a secretive manner, which has been described as a self-contradiction in Renaissance emblems,[2] should perhaps rather be defined as a rule of Platonic pedagogy. 'No one denies', wrote St Augustine, 'that things sought with a certain difficulty are found with much greater pleasure. . . . *Facile investigata plerumque vilescunt.*'[3] Aretino evaded the problem by skilfully dividing the spectators of the *Last Judgment* into the devoutly uninformed on the one hand, and an élite of omniscient experts on the other. He cut out the intermediate phase of suspense, presupposed in any initiation—the wide middle region between knowledge and ignorance, which is the chosen state of the Platonic enthusiast who yearns for wisdom because he does not have it. It was by squarely placing himself on this middle ground that Pico could adopt the rule of withholding the pagan mysteries from the public, and at the same time offer to debate them publicly in Rome. How a debate might be both public and secret, his own propositions were able to illustrate by their teasingly enigmatic form.[4] Designed to arouse surprise, curiosity, and contradiction, they were conceived as part of an *exercitatio*, a solemn game of intellectual wrestling *in hac quasi literaria palaestra.*[5]

But the contest was not confined to letters. 'Try to reduce your inquiry to figures', wrote Cusanus in *De coniecturis*, 'so that under the guidance of sensibility (*sensibili manuductione*) you may turn your conjecture toward the arcana.'[6] While he intended the advice for philosophers, it may be of benefit to the historian also. At least, it has been my assumption in these pages that in studying the Renaissance mysteries through the medium of art, one may approach them *sensibili manuductione.*

[1] Cf. Boas, *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*, p. 23.

[2] Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery*, p. 155.

[3] Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, pp. 488 f.

[4] For example, *Conclusiones . . . de modo intelligendi hymnos Orphei*, no. 1: 'Sicut secretam Magiam a nobis primum ex Orphei hymnis elicitam fas non est in publicum explicare, ita nutu quodam, ut in infrascriptis fiet conclusionibus, eam per aphorismorum capita demonstrasse utile erit ad excitandas contemplativorum mentes.'

[5] *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, p. 134.

[6] *De coniecturis* I, xi.

CHAPTER XIII

PAN AND PROTEUS

In Pico's oration *On the Dignity of Man*, man's glory is derived from his mutability. The fact that his orbit of action is not fixed like that of angels or of animals, gives him the power to transform himself into whatever he chooses and become a mirror of the universe. He can vegetate like a plant, rage like a brute, dance like a star, reason like an angel, and surpass them all by withdrawing into the hidden centre of his own spirit where he may encounter the solitary darkness of God. 'Who would not admire this chameleon?'[1]

In his adventurous pursuit of self-transformation, man explores the universe as if he were exploring himself. And the further he carries these metamorphoses, the more he discovers that all the varied phases of his experience are translatable into each other: for they all reflect the ultimate One, of which they unfold particular aspects. If man did not sense the transcendent unity of the world, its inherent diversity would also escape him. Pico expressed this cryptically but unmistakably in one of the Orphic *Conclusiones*: 'He who cannot attract Pan, approaches Proteus in vain.'[2]

The advice to seek for the hidden Pan in the ever-changing Proteus refers to the principle of 'the whole in the part', of the One inherent in the Many. And it is worth while to watch the principle in operation because it explains the nature of Orphic polytheism, the Renaissance scheme of a pluralistic universe. While the preceding chapters have drawn attention to certain mysteries in their particular setting, an attempt will be made here to survey the Orphic pantheon as a system, and to see by what logical rules, if any, its mysteries are governed.

When Pico wrote that 'the unity of Venus is unfolded in the trinity of the Graces', he added that he who understands that operation clearly and fully, holds the key to the

[1] 'Quis hunc nostrum chamaeleonta non admiretur?' *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, p. 106. The argument occurs also in Ficino, *Theologia Platonica* XIV, iii, as the sixth among sixteen *signa immortalitatis* (*Opera*, pp. 309 ff., cf. Kristeller, *op. cit.*, p. 118).

[2] *Conclusiones . . . de modo intelligendi hymnos Orphei*, no. 28. Also *De hominis dignitate*, *loc. cit.*: 'Quem [hominem] . . . versipellis huius et se ipsam transformantis naturae argumento per Proteum in mysteriis significari. . . .' Repeated in Rhodiginus, *Lectiones antiquae* I, xxxix: 'tamquam Proteus aut Chamaeleon'.

whole of Orphic theology.[1] Indeed, the unfolding of a divine unit into a triad is but an inverse expression of the Neoplatonic law that 'the contraries coincide in the One' (*contradictoria coincidunt in natura uniali*).[2] While this resolution is final only in the supreme One, whose names are legion because it is nameless, each subordinate being, in so far as it has unity, repeats the process of the One and generates triads; that is, it unfolds its nature by exhibiting its extremes and holding them together through a common centre.

The argument has a disconcertingly modern ring,[3] and because it sounds Hegelian, it would be tempting to dismiss it as anachronistic; but the similarity is not adventitious. If the notorious triads of Hegel resemble those employed in the Orphic theology of the Renaissance, it is because he drew partly from the same ancient sources. In Hegel's opinion, Plato's *Parmenides* was 'perhaps the greatest masterpiece of ancient dialectics';[4] and he also recalled that it was from that dialogue that some of the late-antique and Renaissance Neoplatonists professed to derive their fusion of dialectic with ecstasy:

'Inzwischen kann ich bedenken, dass . . . es auch Zeiten gegeben, welche sogar Zeiten der Schwärmerei genannt werden, worin . . . der Parmenides des Plato, wohl das grösste Kunstwerk der alten Dialektik, für die wahre Enthüllung und den positiven Ausdruck des göttlichen Lebens gehalten wurde, und sogar bei vieler Trübheit dessen, was die Ekstase erzeugte, diese missverstandene Ekstase in der Tat nichts anderes als der reine Begriff sein sollte.'

In this passage, from the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*,[5] Hegel claims that his own dialectic was darkly foreshadowed in Neoplatonic dithyrambs, which would only need to be freed from the confusions of ecstasy to reveal Hegel's 'Selbstbewegung des Begriffs'. Later he developed the comparison more fully in the *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* by analysing the *Parmenides* in the light of Proclus,[6] whose system of triads he recorded in detail, praising it as 'die Spitze der neuplatonischen Philosophie' while stressing its demonstrable affinity to his own system.[7]

Nor was Hegel alone in these observations. In 1820 two separate editions of Proclus began to appear in Frankfurt and Paris, one by Creuzer, the other by Cousin, and both

[1] *Conclusiones . . . de modo intelligendi hymnos Orphei*, no. 8. [2] *Conclusiones paradoxae*, no. 15.

[3] 'Il faut que notre pensée se développe', wrote Valéry, 'et il faut qu'elle se conserve. Elle n'avance que par les extrêmes, mais elle ne subsiste que par les moyens.'

[4] *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Vorrede (Glockner edition II, pp. 64 f.).

[5] *Loc. cit.* Hegel's reference to 'Zeiten der Schwärmerei' should be compared with W. G. Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1789–1819), the sixth volume of which, published in 1807, deals with 'Schwärmerische Philosophie der Alexandriner und Neuplatoniker' (pp. 284–352: Proclus).

[6] Glockner edition XVIII, pp. 243 f.

[7] *Ibid.* XIX, pp. 78–93.

with dedications to Hegel and Schelling.[1] Creuzer reports in his autobiography that he was guided by Hegel in the work on the edition;[2] and although, in penning his formidable dedications, he extolled Hegel and Schelling indiscriminately among 'the foremost interpreters of Platonic texts',[3] he noted in his autobiography this difference between them, that 'Hegel cared less for Plotinus than for Proclus', and that Hegel ascribed, in contrast to Schelling, the greatest importance to the *Institutio theologica*, in which Proclus had reduced the Neoplatonic triads to a rigid system of deduction.[4] Cousin, in his turn, observed the same distinction between the two 'leaders of present philosophy': for while he hailed Schelling and Hegel together as 'the restorers of the Parmenidean and Platonic One',[5] he noticed particularly in his 'friend Hegel' (*amicus Hegelius*) a striking resemblance with Proclus himself: *qui et ipse cum Proclo nostro tantam similitudinem refert.*[6] Less sympathetic, Schleiermacher looked upon the Platonic affinities of Hegel with undisguised malice. In the preface to his translation of Plato's *Parmenides* he observed that 'this is certainly the oldest attempt in philosophy to construe cognition through a union of contraries (*der . . . gewiss in der Philosophie älteste Versuch, durch Verknüpfung von Gegensätzen Erkenntnis zu konstruieren*)',[7] and he added caustically that 'few may have guessed the age of that method' which is 'so similar to certain things that have turned up among us'. If we add that in a dialogue by Schelling, entitled *Bruno, oder über das göttliche und natürliche Princip der*

[1] Cousin's edition (*Procli philosophi platonici opera*) was the first to appear, and despite his attempt to appease the *amicissimum Creuzerum* (I, pp. xlix f.), Creuzer attacked it spitefully in his own preface (*Initia philosophiae ac theologiae ex platonicis fontibus ducta* I, pp. viii f.). Cousin replied in vol. III, pp. viii f.

[2] *Aus dem Leben eines alten Professors*, pp. 123 ff. In the edition of Proclus (*Initia* II, p. 82 note 6) he introduced an emendation by Hegel with the words: 'Hoc vult philosophus.' Fuller quotations from Hegel, *ibid.* II, pp. 325 f.

[3] Vol. I was dedicated to Boissonade and Schelling as 'Platonicorum monumentorum philosophiaeque interpretibus primariis'; vol. II to Hegel and van Heusde as 'philosophiae veteris cum universae tum eius imprimis quae Platonicis monumentis continetur interpretibus primariis'.

[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 124, a capital document on Hegel and Schelling, as well as on Creuzer. 'Hegel hielt weniger auf Plotin als auf Proclus, und legte besonders diesem Buche des letzteren [*Procli Institutio theologica*] einen grossen Wert bei. Daher er, wissend, dass ich handschriftliche Hülfsmittel dazu habe, dringend mir anlag, es neu zu bearbeiten. Ich willfahrte ihm unter der Bedingung, dass ich ihm die Druckbogen zusende, und er mir seine Bemerkungen dazu mitteile. Dies ist denn auch . . . brieflich von ihm geschehen, und ich habe sie in einem Epimetrum zu der im folgenden Jahre erschienenen Ausgabe abdrucken lassen. . . . Dagegen schrieb mir Schelling in einem Briefe (Erlangen den 13. Sept. 1822) unter anderm: "Ich werde nun versuchen, mich mit Ihrer Hilfe auch in diese *Institutionem theologicam* des Proclus hineinzuarbeiten, wiewohl ich nicht leugne, dass ich mich vor der Eintönigkeit der Darstellung und dem Dogmatischen des Vortrags einigermassen fürchte."—Und dies war und ist [Creuzer adds on his own] auch meine Empfindung; weshalb ich aus eigner Bewegung auch schwerlich jemals diese Schrift bearbeitet haben würde.'

[5] IV (1821), p. v. The volume is devoted to Proclus's *Commentarii in Parmenidem Platonis* and bears a dedication to Boissonade: 'nec non amicis et magistris F. W. J. Schelling et G. W. F. Hegel, philosophiae praesentis ducibus, unius Parmenidei et Platonici restitutoribus.' Cf. recently Klibansky, Preface to *Plato latinus* III ('Parmenides . . . nec non Procli commentarium'), p. x, with further quotations from Hegel.

[6] I, pp. xlix f.

[7] It is interesting that Schleiermacher, aware of Plato's opposition to Heraclitus, spoke of 'Verknüpfung von Gegensätzen' not of 'Koinzidenz von Gegensätzen'.

Dinge, the great rival of Hegel adopted for himself Giordano Bruno's use of the coincidence of opposites, declaring it to be 'das Symbolon der wahren Philosophie',[1] we may conclude that the revival of Platonism in the Renaissance was echoed in the early nineteenth century by a Romantic revival of certain Renaissance arguments.[2]

The great difference in climate, however, should warn us against treating the two revivals as identical: for nothing could be further apart in temperament than Schelling's 'philosophy of mysteries' and that of Bruno, or Pico's and Hegel's 'union of contraries'. The *Weltseele* of Schelling, although more effeminate, was no less voracious than Hegel's *Weltgeist*: both lived on a diet of tortuous positivism which would have killed Poetic Theology. But in so far as all these divergent philosophies of transmutation suffer, to put it negatively, from the same logical idiosyncrasies, they may exhibit certain typical deviations from classical logic, which it would be useful to record. Hegel was certainly not the first to flout in his logic the classical principles of identity, contradiction, and the excluded middle. The same use, or abuse, of ambiguity by which he made identity unfold itself as contrarious, was also at the root of Pico's parable that Pan is hidden in Proteus. Mutability, in Pico's view, is the secret gate through which the universal invades the particular. Proteus persistently transforms himself because Pan is inherent in him.

All the particular gods, in the Orphic theology as outlined by Pico, seem animated by a law of self-contrariety, which is also a law of self-transcendence. The chaste Diana, despite her coldness, is a mad huntress and changeable as the moon; the mad Dionysus

[1] The reference is to Bruno, *De la causa, principio et uno* V, quoted by Schelling in Jacobi's translation: 'Um in die tiefsten Geheimnisse der Natur einzudringen, muss man nicht müde werden, den entgegengesetzten und widerstreitenden äussersten Enden der Dinge, dem Maximum und Minimum nachzuforschen; den Punkt der Vereinigung zu finden, ist nicht das Grösste, sondern aus demselben auch sein Entgegengesetztes zu entwickeln, dieses ist das eigentliche und tiefste Geheimnis der Kunst' (Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke* I, iv, 1859, p. 328, after F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza, in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, 1789, Beilage I, p. 305). The same passage from Bruno was singled out by Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie, ed. cit.* XIX, p. 233: 'Dies ist ein grosses Wort.' But he expounded it in the manner of Proclus: 'in Proklus' Manier' (p. 237), '... auch bei Proklus das Dritte im Ersten' (p. 238). And he reproached Schelling (*op. cit.*, p. 667) for having accepted the Neoplatonic Absolute without penetrating to it through the 'movement' of Plato's dialectic. On the other hand, the ritualistic aspects of Neoplatonism appealed to Schelling more than to Hegel. The following passage from Schelling's *Bruno* (*op. cit.*, p. 329) should be compared with Pico's 'Osiris ladder' (above, pp. 115 f.): 'Diesem folgend werden wir . . . auf dieser geistigen Leiter frei und ohne Widerstand auf und ab uns bewegen, jetzt herabsteigend die Einheit des göttlichen und natürlichen Prinzips getrennt, jetzt hinaufsteigend und alles wieder auflösend in das Eine, die Natur in Gott, Gott aber in der Natur sehen. . . . Auch die Schicksale des Universums werden uns nicht verborgen bleiben . . . , noch werden uns die Vorstellungen von den Schicksalen und dem Tode eines Gottes dunkel sein, die in allen Mysterien gegeben werden, die Leiden des Osiris und der Tod des Adonis.'

[2] Ficino occupies the first place in Creuzer's essays 'Zur Geschichte der Classischen Philologie seit Wiederherstellung der Literatur' (*Deutsche Schriften* V, ii, 1854, pp. 10–21), in the preface of which he says, 'Ich hatte einmal den Gedanken, ihr [dieser Schrift] den metaphorischen Titel: *philologische Ahnenbilder* vorzusetzen.' See also *Prolegomena literaria de Plotino* in Creuzer's Oxford edition of Plotinus I (1835), pp. xxxvi ff. note 4: 'De restituta per Italiam philosophia platonica eiusque restitutionis causis auctoribusque'.

not only rages, but through his rage he purifies and consoles; Apollo inspires by his music poetic frenzy as well as poetic measure; Hermes, the god of eloquence, advises silence,[1] and Minerva, the goddess of peace, favours a martial garb; Mars, the god of war, is enamoured of Venus who, as the goddess of Concord, loves Strife. In short, all the gods, without exception, appear in Orphic theology both as inciters and as moderators, they are *dei ambigui* (to use a phrase from the *Hypnerotomachia*);[2] and because each god thus shares in the temperament of other gods, they are able to assist and also to offset each other. The wild Dionysus, on Mount Parnassus, finds himself checked by a stern Apollo, who in his turn, when he appears opposite to Minerva, softens her severity.[3] Apollo thus resembles a tenor who would sing the second voice in a duet with a soprano, and the first voice in a duet with a bass: except that, in this particular music, each voice mysteriously includes all others, although, when externally juxtaposed, they tend to bring out each other's peculiarities.

In the *Eroici furori*, Giordano Bruno illustrated the principle by Ficino's old example, the Judgment of Paris. The three goddesses, Bruno explained, did not represent three mutually exclusive perfections: for it would be a denial of their divinity to say that the beauty of Venus was without majesty or wisdom, the wisdom of Minerva without beauty or majesty, or the majesty of Juno without wisdom or beauty. Since all three were perfect, they could not be wholly deprived of any of these attributes; but their perfection was finite because, in each goddess, one of the three attributes which they all held in common, prevailed over the other two. And for that reason alone, because of their finite perfection, discord arose between them. And therefore Paris ought not to have given the apple to any finite power in which beauty prevailed over wisdom, or wisdom over majesty, or majesty over beauty, but only to that infinite power in which they coincide: 'For in the simplicity of the divine essence . . . all these perfections are equal because they are infinite.'[4] The fable teaches, according to Bruno, that when divine perfections become finite, they disclose through their discord an over-ruling harmony, of which each is only a partial expression. Their finite collisions carry the overtone of their coincidence in the infinite; and thus one dominant consonance emerges from a variety of discords.[5]

[1] Our fig. 21; cf. above, p. 20 note 3.

[2] *Hypnerotomachia* fol. b v[r].

[3] For Dionysus-Apollo see the portrait of Alberto Pio (Mond Collection, National Gallery, London), which should be ascribed, I believe, to Giacomo Francia. It shows the Muses divided between Apollo and Dionysus, whose temples, inscribed with their names, occupy the two peaks of Parnassus. For Apollo-Minerva see Raphael's *School of Athens*.

[4] I, v, 11 (Sonnet xxxv, *pulchriori detur*). Bruno must have been aware that exactly the same argument was used by Augustine, *De Trinitate* VI, x, 12, to distinguish the supreme and infinite Trinity, in which the parts are equal to the whole, from any subordinate and finite trinity, in which they are necessarily unequal.

[5] Again the pedantry of Conrad Celtes may be of use in elucidating the argument. The Judgment of

Bruno hardly needed to learn that particular reasoning from Cusanus,[1] since Ficino had already drawn from it the cogent lesson that it is a mistake to worship one god alone. In order to invoke the help of Minerva, it is wise to pay homage also to Juno and Venus; and it would be impossible to secure the protection of Venus without facing some aspect of Diana or of Mars. By calling one god, one calls his affiliates; and by calling a few, one calls them all. Polytheism leads to the Pantheon.

> *Nimmer, das glaubt mir, erscheinen die Götter,*
> *Nimmer allein.*[2]

The mutual entailment of the gods was a genuine Platonic lesson. Plato called it κοινωνία τῶν γενῶν, and he explained that the members of the divine community are alternately divided and conjoined by a dialectical 'movement' (κίνησις) which brings out their 'sameness' and 'otherness' through a series of changing configurations.[3] With every shift of argument a new harmony or discord may thus be discovered between the gods, and it was expected of a Renaissance humanist, when he contrived the programme of a new mythological image, that his genius would surprise, enlighten, and satisfy the spectator by the persuasive twist of his 'invention'. The range and freshness of some of these turns, no less than their occasional deviousness, are the despair of iconographical mechanics. As in a good musical composition, the developments are both logical and unforeseen. In the presence of a bluntly aggressive Venus we may see Diana join the fight on the side of Minerva, as in Perugino's *Battle of Love and Chastity*;[4] but when Minerva, in Tritonius's *Melopoiae*, represents the rational aspect of Apollo, we find that Diana has taken the side of Dionysus and enacts the part of a sylvan fury.[5]

Paris, which he placed at the bottom of his pyramid of learning (Burkhard, *Burgkmair*, no. 10; cf. above, p. 44 note 9), includes an allegorical figure, inscribed *Discordia*, who brings the apple of strife to Paris, while Mercury, placed on the other side of Paris, lifts the caduceus as the emblem of concord. The interaction between these contrary forces, as they enter into the Judgment of Paris, is explained by the inscription: *errando discitur philosophia.* Paris' error is but the first step in the process of drawing concord out of discord. In the *Sigillum collegii poetarum Viennae*, again invented by Celtes and engraved by Burgkmair (*op. cit.*, no. 7), Apollo killing the python is juxtaposed to Mercury playing the flute, another illustration of *discordia concors.*

[1] Bruno's references to Cusanus listed in F. I. Clemens, *Giordano Bruno und Nicolaus von Cusa* (1847), pp. 134 f.

[2] Schiller, *Dithyrambe.* A clear statement of the philosophical implications in Schiller, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, vi: '. . . so fein und scharf sie [die Vernunft der Griechen] auch trennte, so verstümmelte sie doch nie. Sie zerlegte zwar die menschliche Natur und warf sie in ihrem herrlichen Götterkreis vergrössert auseinander, aber nicht dadurch dass sie sie in Stücken riss, sondern dadurch dass sie sie verschiedentlich mischte, denn die ganze Menschheit fehlte in keinem einzigen Gott.'

[3] *Sophist* 252 ff. On *theomachies* as symbols of the κοινωνία τῶν γενῶν, from which issues both union and division between the gods, see Proclus, *In Rempublicam* 373, translated in Taylor, *Orphic Hymns*, pp. 158 ff., note. Also Proclus, *In Parmenidem* V, 1028 (Cousin[2]).

[4] Louvre, from the *grotta* of Isabella d'Este; cf. Wind, *Bellini's Feast of the Gods*, p. 19 note 41.

[5] The illustration of Parnassus in the *Melopoiae*, however unattractive in itself, is important as an iconographic link between Raphael's *Parnassus* and the portrait of Alberto Pio (above, p. 162 note 3). The association Diana-Dionysus also in Gyraldus I, 267, dedication of Syntagma viii, 'De Baccho'.

It makes for the logic and liveliness of the Orphic gods that they partake of what the Marquess of Halifax called *the character of a trimmer*. ('This innocent word *trimmer*', Halifax explained, 'signifies no more than this, that if men are together in a boat, and one part of the company would weigh it down on one side, another would make it lean as much to the contrary.'[1]) In the ever-changing *balance des dieux* the gods reveal their Protean nature: but the very fact that each god contains his opposite in himself, and can change into it when occasion demands, makes him shadow forth the nature of Pan in whom all opposites are one.

* * * * *

In the Orphic Hymns the duplicity of the gods was emphatically praised as a divine power:

War's parent, mighty, of majestic frame,
Deceitful saviour, liberating dame.[2]

Such compliments were addressed in the Hymns not only to Rhea (whom they fit because she saved Jupiter by deceiving Saturn), but also to Minerva, to Diana, to Apollo, whose powers were celebrated as ambivalent. Philosophers committed to the coincidence of opposites of course seized on that fact as confirming their view;[3] which helps to explain why 'composite gods' became the rule rather than the exception in Orphic theology. Whatever may be said against the divine hybrids, the curious cross-breeds that people the Orphic pantheon, they express the Orphic spirit at its fullest, and it is remarkable with what persistence and shrewdness the Renaissance antiquarians justified a predilection for them. An incidental passage in Virgil or Statius, a passing reference in Pausanias, Lucian, Cicero, or Ausonius, a capricious epigram in one or two of the elegiac poets, were sufficient to 'prove' the authenticity of a Venus-Diana, a Hermathena, a Hermeros, a Hypneros, a Hermercules, a Hercules Musagetes, a Fortuna-Nemesis, a Nemesis Amoris, a Venus Armata or Venus Victrix bearing the weapons of Mars or of Minerva.[4] Even the wanton statues of the Hermaphrodite, which inspired the jocular sallies of Beccadelli,[5] did not escape a mystical reading: 'ad superi-

[1] *The Character of a Trimmer* (1699).

[2] Taylor's translation of the *Hymns of Orpheus* (1787), p. 139, 'To Rhea'.

[3] Cf. Ficino, *Opera*, p. 1374: '... Iamblichus ... eiusmodi daemones [i.e. mundi rectores] inquit partim quidem alligare nos fato, partim vero solvere. Hinc Orpheus saepe numina claves tenere canit, quibus videlicet claudant pariter et aperiant.' On the affinity of the Orphic gods to Janus, see below, pp. 165, 185.

[4] Valuable observations on 'theocrasy', that is, on the fusion of the gods as a recurrent feature of Greek mythology, in Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte* II (1906), pp. 1093–6.

[5] Beccadelli's *Hermaphroditus*, dedicated to Cosimo de' Medici, was meant to amuse (like Beccadelli's reckless talk in Valla's *De voluptate*) a circle of humanists steeped in syncretism. In reading these poems it is well to remember that it was presumably for the same circle that Donatello made the poly-

orem intellectum referri debent', wrote the impervious Pierio Valeriano.[1] A secretive, esoteric tone attended all of these mythological compounds, and often also a tone of mockery. The title of the *Hypnerotomachia* recalled the titles of Homeric burlesques, of the classical *Batrachomyomachia* or Prodromus's *Galeomyomachia*:

For through the Janus of a joke
The candid psychopompos spoke.[2]

If the spirit of sacred *drôlerie* was responsible, in mystical Renaissance language, for some remarkably ugly neologisms (like Cusanus's *possest* or the hieroglyphic *paedogeron*),[3] it also gave rise to a Neoplatonic re-interpretation of that most symmetrical of monsters, the double-headed Janus. Mindful of the opening passages of Ovid's *Fasti*, where Janus presides over the gates of heaven,[4] Pico reserved the symbol of Janus for the 'celestial souls', that is, for the souls that animate the firmament. 'In ancient poetry', he claimed, 'these souls were signified by the double-headed Janus, because, being supplied like him with eyes in front and behind, they can at the same time see the spiritual things and provide for the material.'[5] But our inferior souls cannot do both at the same time. 'Before they fall into this earthly body, our souls also have two faces . . . but when they descend into the body, it is for them as if they were cut in half [*se fussino per mezzo divise*], and of the two faces there remains only one, whence every time that they turn the one face that is left to them toward sensible beauty, they remain deprived of the vision of the other.'[6] And thus a Platonic dilemma was read into the comic fable told by Aristophanes in the *Symposium* that man was originally double, but lost his perfection when he was cut in half.

On a medal of the Paduan philosopher Marcantonio Passeri, the comic monster of Aristophanes—like a pair of Siamese twins, with heads joined in Janus-fashion—appears with the inscription: PHILOSOPHIA DUCE REGREDIMUR (fig. 68).[7]

morphous Cupid (now in the Bargello) who, although he has the face and wings of a classical Eros, wears the tail of a Pan, the trousers of Attis, the belt of Hypnos, and the sandals of Mercury. On *Eros Pantheos* see Pauly-Wissowa XVIII, iii, 746, s.v. *Pantheion*; also Gyraldus I, 409 on *Eros pandamator*.

[1] *Hieroglyphica* XVIII, fol. 135[r].

[2] W. H. Auden, *New Year Letter*.

[3] The *paedogeron*, or *puer senex*, is explained above, p. 90 note 4, as a fusion of Youth (παῖς) and Old Age (γέρων). On Cusanus's *possest*, which unites *est* and *posse*, see above, p. 94 note 1.

[4] *Fasti* I, 125.

[5] *Commento* II, xxv (ed. Garin III, iii, pp. 526 ff.).

[6] *Commento*, *loc. cit.*, ed. Garin, p. 529. The chapter ends (p. 531) with an explicit reference to 'la fabula di Aristofane, posta nel *Convivio* di Platone'. As so often in Pico, the passage reads like a tightening-up of Ficino's system. The two-fold animation of the spheres was quoted by Ficino from the 'theology of Orpheus', but in that context he did not speak of Janus (*Theologia Platonica* IV, i, *Opera*, pp. 130 f.). On the other hand, when he did compare the soul to Janus, because it connects the eternal with the temporal, he did not restrict the image to celestial souls but spoke of the soul in general (*Theologia Platonica* XVI, v, *Opera*, p. 375; also *Epistolae* I, *ibid.*, pp. 657 f.; cf. Kristeller, *op. cit.*, pp. 393 ff.), and without reference to Aristophanes' fable, or his own interpretation of it (*De amore* IV, *Opera*, pp. 1330–4.)

[7] The woodcut, after a medal by Cavino, appears in I. P. Tomasinus, *Illustrorum virorum elogia* (Padua 1630), p. 104, where the groundline is

This unattractive picture represents the perfect man; and the irony was intentional, an Orphic portent. In Ficino's Commentary on the *Symposium*, the explanation of this particular myth was assigned to Cristoforo Landino, 'whom we recognize as the foremost Orphic and Platonic poet of our time'.[1] An Orphic poet could not doubt that the monstrousness of Aristophanes' fable was a sign that it concealed a sacred mystery; and in that he followed, perhaps more than he knew, the distant precedent of Alexandrian Platonism. The biblical passage: 'and he divided them in the midst' (Genesis xv, 10) had been cited by Philo as crucial evidence for the λόγος τομεύς, the 'Logos as cutter', who produces 'creation by dichotomy' but is the 'joiner of the universe' as well.[2] In Aristophanes' fable the divided man longs to regain his original integrity; and as Landino is made to explain in Ficino, that benefit is conferred on him by the power of Love: 'quod nos olim divisos in integrum restituendo reducit in coelum'.[3] Instead of having to turn around to see the light, like the prisoners in Plato's allegory of the cave, the Aristophanic man can attend to the upper and lower worlds simultaneously. He no longer requires the ἐπιστροφή. For Ficino the ridiculous monster thus concealed a vision of celestial bliss. Aristophanes' rather explicit moral appeared to him as *obscura et implicita Aristophanis sententia*, requiring *enodationem adhuc aliquam lucemque.*

Since the ordinary rules of evidence were reversed by the Orphic rule of concealment, it is not surprising that the Orphic theologians managed to extract their hybrid gods from texts unsuspected of mysticism. The more inauspicious a classical reference was, the more acceptable it became as a sacred witness: for if Venus-Diana represented a mystery, it was only right that Virgil did not dwell on the figure, but mentioned her only once in the whole of the *Aeneid.*[4] Plato did even better by never mentioning at all that Athena and Eros were worshipped jointly in the grounds of the Academy (the fact was casually revealed by Athenaeus).[5] Nor did Cicero display, when he acquired a Hermathena for Tusculum, any of his usual volubility;[6] but that was all the more reason for Bocchi, when he adopted the emblem for his academy, to interpret it as a secret admonition in the style of *festina lente*: Combine the swiftness of

mistaken for a staff and the figure placed upright. For the correct position see *Museum Mazzuchellianum* I (1761), pl. lxix, 4; G. Habich, *Die Medaillen der italienischen Renaissance* [1924], pl. lxxvi, 12. Because of his Genoese descent, Passeri adopted the byname *De Ianua*, to which his Janus-like emblem undoubtedly refers.

[1] *De amore* IV, i, *Opera*, p. 1330.

[2] E. R. Goodenough, 'A Neo-Pythagorean Source in Philo Judaeus', *Yale Classical Studies* III (1932), pp. 115–64, with further literature. Also the same author's *By Light, Light* (1935), p. 66, and, on the singular and plural in Philo, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* I (1953), pp. 49 f.

[3] *De amore* IV, vi, *Opera*, pp. 1333 f. ('Amor animas reducit in coelum').

[4] *Aeneid* I, 315.

[5] *Deipnosophists* XIII, 561D–E. The union of Athena and Eros recurs in Pico, *Conclusiones . . . in doctrinam Platonis*, no. 14; also in Rhodiginus, *Lectiones antiquae* IX, xxiv, p. 449.

[6] *Ad Atticum*, I, i, 5; I, iv, 3.

the god of eloquence (Hermes) with the steadfastness of the goddess of wisdom (Athena)![1]

The belief that because a thing is not stressed it must be important, is not entirely without merit, but it can lead to exegetic madness. Gibbon ridiculed a faith which taught its adherents that a 'contradictory doctrine *must* be divine since no man alive could have thought of inventing it'. By the same token it is a prejudice to assume that a thing must be central because it looks marginal. On the other hand, the supposition that some things which look marginal *may* be central, is one of those judicious reflections which rarely fail to open up new fields of knowledge because they introduce a change of focus. Not only is it true that great discoveries have generally 'centred' around the 'fringes' of knowledge, but the very progress of knowledge may be regarded as a persistent shift of centre. In Cusanus and Pico, a sharp instinctive awareness of the rule that any given knowledge may be transcended, was condensed into a mystical superstition: a belief that all important truths are cryptic. But from this bleak, retardative axiom of faith, perhaps the most perilous vestige of Neoplatonism, they drew a prophetic rule of learning: that it is more profitable to explore the hidden bypaths of knowledge than to tread the common highways. Enlightenment and obscurantism were tightly linked in the method of the *docta ignorantia*.

Perhaps it is possible now to understand more clearly why the 'hybrid gods', who were at best a bypath of classical mythology (if not a remnant of a pre-classical phase),[2] seemed so important to the humanists of the Orphic persuasion. These gods seemed closer to the secret centre of myth than the plain gods, of well-defined character, who occupied the common highways. If they resembled monsters and abnormal portents, it was not because of a wilful preference for the grotesque. The unusual subject demanded an unusual tone: for it would be nonsense to make *mirabilia* look familiar. Like all valid symbols, the fabulous Orphic images reveal what they appear to conceal. Their meaning requires, to be properly expressed, a transcendent and hence implausible vocabulary which may produce laughter as well as awe, and even a Christian kind of reverence. For it should be noticed that in composite gods the tension between chastity and passion, or penitence and pleasure, which is generally associated with the conflict between Christianity and paganism, was revealed as a phase of paganism itself.

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[1] In Bocchi's *Hermathena* (symbolon no. cii) the two gods are joined by Eros (like Hermes and Heracles in the *Deipnosophists, loc. cit.*). A combination of Hermes and Athena, with the suggestion that it typifies the Academy, figured also in Ficino's dedication of Plato's *Statesman* to Federigo da Montefeltre (*Opera*, pp. 855, 1294). See also Cartari, *Imagini*, p. 356, s.v. 'Minerva'.

[2] Cf. Jessen's article 'Hermaphroditos' in Pauly-Wissowa VIII (1913), pp. 714–21. On the revival of hybrid gods in Hellenistic mysteries, see below, p. 174 note 2.

But however irregular and unfamiliar to the outward view, the hybrid gods of Orphic theology consistently follow a logic of their own, which is the logic of concealment. And by that logic their meaning can be 'unfolded' or made more explicit, provided the rule of 'infolding' has been mastered first, which Cusanus distinguished from *explicatio* by the quaint but fitting name of *complicatio*. When the Venus-Virgo becomes 'unfolded' in the three Graces, as we have seen, each Grace represents a less 'complicated' state of mind than the 'infolded' Venus from whom they descend. Theoretically, the process of explication could be continued indefinitely; and the further it proceeds, the plainer are the elements obtained. But so long as the elements remain interdependent, they all partake of each other's nature, and pure externality is never reached. Absolute plainness is therefore an illusion produced by a severance of the universal link through which even the most 'explicit' members of this expanding series retain an inherent 'complication'. *Castitas*, as represented by one of the Graces, would become 'plain and simple' only if she gave up her part as a Grace. Only then would she merge with the stock figure of purity, a plain Diana or Minerva alien to Venus. And the same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the plain Venus herself, the stock figure of Pleasure. Thus a marked and critical breach remains, which separates even the lowest or plainest of unfolded terms from a literal-minded statement.

It is useful to look at the breach from the opposite side by studying the logic of an exoteric fable. In *The Choice of Hercules*, for example, which is the perfect instance of a popular moral, the terms of the argument are literal and fixed. Voluptas is appointed to tempt the hero with her specious allurements, while Virtus acquaints him in all her austerity with the arduous prospect of heroic labours: and it may be expected of a reliable Hercules that he will not remain suspended between them. The choice is clear because the two opposites, having been introduced in a complete disjunction, obey the logical principle of the excluded middle: *tertium non datur*. It is the absence of any transcendent alternative which renders the moral so respectable; but although the humanists used it profusely in their exoteric instruction,[1] they left no doubt that, for a Platonic initiate, it was but the crust, and not the marrow. 'So far, indeed, we are in the light,' wrote Pico, 'but God has placed his dwelling in darkness.' In Ben Jonson's *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, a sequence of 'knots' is introduced by the dancing master Daedalus, who interweaves the two opposites in a perfect maze; and his labyrinthian designs are accompanied by a warning that while the 'first figure'

[1] As is shown by the comprehensive collection in Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege*. It is the more remarkable that in the mystical interpretation of Hercules (cf. Marcel Simon, *Hercule et le Christianisme*, 1955) the labours of Hercules and his self-immolation are the chief subjects, while the fable of his Choice receives little attention, the Pythagorean cipher for the cross roads notwithstanding.

should suggest the contrast of Virtue and Pleasure as in the Choice of Hercules,[1] it is the purpose of the dance to 'entwine' Pleasure and Virtue beyond recognition:

Come on, come on! and where you go,
So interweave the curious knot,
As ev'n the observer scarce may know
Which lines are Pleasure's, and which not.

In the course of tying the knot, the 'unfolded' figures, which appeared familiar because they were closer to exoteric terms, are united—'infolded'—in a mysterious cipher which comprises the contraries as one; and when 'complication' reaches its height, and the opposites become indistinguishable, all multiplicity vanishes in the One beyond Being—the absolutely unfamiliar, for which there is no fitting image or name.

It follows that all mystical images, because they retain a certain articulation by which they are distinguished as 'hedges' or *umbraculae*, belong to an intermediate state, which invites further 'complication' above, and further 'explication' below. They are never final in the sense of a literal statement, which would fix the mind to a given point; nor are they final in the sense of the mystical Absolute in which all images would vanish. Rather they keep the mind in continued suspense by presenting the paradox of an 'inherent transcendence'; they persistently hint at more than they say. It is a mistake, therefore, to overlook a certain ambiguity in the praise of hieroglyphs which Ficino, and after him Giordano Bruno, adopted from an incidental remark by Plotinus.[2] In a famous passage of the fifth *Ennead*, Plotinus had suggested that Egyptian ciphers are more suitable for sacred script than alphabetic writing because they represent the diverse parts of a discourse as implicit, and thus concealed, in one single form.[3] Since Pico ascribed the same virtue to the writing of Hebrew without vowels,[4] it is legitimate to suspect that the Renaissance speculations on 'implicit signs' were not concerned with a positive theory of optical intuition,[5] but with that far less attractive subject called

[1] 'First figure out the doubtful way, / At which a while all youth should stay, / Where she [Pleasure] and Virtue did contend, / Which should have Hercules to friend.'

[2] Ficino, *In Plotinum* V, viii (*Opera*, p. 1768); Giordano Bruno, *De magia* (*Opera latina*, ed. F. Tocco and H. Vitelli, III, 1891, pp. 441 f.).

[3] *Enneads* V, viii, 6. Cf. Boas, in *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*, pp. 21 f. It should be remembered that the passage develops the praise of 'undrawn images', ἀγάλματα οὐ γεγραμμένα (*Enneads* V, viii, 5), a term not too partial to the visual arts. Plotinus clearly distinguishes between ἀγάλμα and εἴδωλον, and he applies the term ἀθρόον ('implicit') only to the former. Since his use of language is always paraphrastic and hinting, it should not be pressed for a downright 'theory of hieroglyphs'.

[4] *Conclusiones cabalisticae numero LXXI*, no. 70: 'Per modum legendi sine punctis in lege, et modus scribendi res divinas et unialis continentia per indeterminatum ambitum rerum divinarum nobis ostenditur.' Reuchlin, *De verbo mirifico* (1514), fols. g iv^{v}–h iv^{v}, shows in some detail how the writing of Hebrew without vowels, which allows for multiple verbal expansion, has the same cryptic virtue as the designing of hieroglyphs.

[5] The exaggerated inferences recently drawn concerning 'the visual image in Neoplatonic thought', now summarized in Chastel, *Marsile Ficin et l'art*, pp. 72, 77 notes 5 f., rest on a confusion between the

steganography, the cryptic recording of sacred knowledge. Because God, in the opinion of Ficino, 'has the knowledge of things not by a multiplicity of thoughts about an object, but by a simple and firm grasp of its essence', it seemed only right that the Egyptian priests had imitated the divine comprehension in their script, signifying 'the divine mysteries not by the use of minutely written letters, but of whole figures of plants, trees, and beasts'.[1] But as Erasmus observed in the *Adagia*, the content of these figures was not meant to be open to direct inspection, or 'accessible to anyone's guess' (*ut non cuius statim promptum esset conjicere*); they presupposed in the reader a full acquaintance with the properties of each animal, plant or thing represented: 'is demum collatis eorum symbolorum coniecturis aenigma sententiae deprehendebat.'[2] Thus, contrary to the divine intelligence which the reading of hieroglyphs is supposed to foreshadow, the intuitive grasp of them depends on discursive knowledge. Unless one knows what a hieroglyph means, one cannot *see* what it says. But once one has acquired the relevant knowledge, 'unfolded' by more or less exoteric instruction, one can take pleasure in finding it 'infolded' in an esoteric image or sign.[3]

Thus the rules of 'explication' and 'complication', by which we found the Orphic images to be governed, apply to Renaissance hieroglyphs as well. They are, all of them, 'hedges' or *umbraculae*, infested with the paradox of self-transcendence. For it is a general rule of Neoplatonic symbolism, because Pan is always inherent in Proteus, that

'intuitive' as the implicit, and the 'intuitive' as the visual, which is scarcely improved by the suggestion that the two 'could easily merge' (Gombrich, 'Icones symbolicae', *op. cit.*, p. 171). For the assumption that Ficino's philosophy taught or implied 'the superiority of *visual* intuition over discursive reason' (*ibid.*, p. 184, italics mine), there is no evidence in his writings. Ficino placed the visual medium below the verbal, a sacred name being higher and holier for him than a sacred image; see above, p. 110 note 2.

[1] Ficino, *loc. cit.*

[2] *Adagia*, s.v. *festina lente* (digression on hieroglyphs). See also Gyraldus, *De poetarum historia* I (*Opera* II, 18).

[3] It follows that Ficino's praise of the *Hieroglyphica* of Horapollo, however interesting as a scholium to Plotinus (*loc. cit.*, *Opera*, p. 1768), gives only an incomplete account of their Renaissance use. It is noticeable, for example, that while Plotinus had stressed the implicit understanding of hieroglyphs, and Ficino had praised them for their power of contracting many thoughts into one single form, those who designed 'authentic hieroglyphs' after classical monuments were particularly attracted by the reverse possibility, that of expanding the symbols into an additive picture-script, whose parts were to be read like words and sentences of a discursive language; cf. Hülsen, *Le illustrazioni della 'Hypnerotomachia Polifili' e le antichità di Roma* (1910); L. Volkmann, *Bilderschriften der Renaissance* (1923), p. 16, fig. 5. The *Hypnerotomachia* carried that method to extremes by translating Latin sentences, word by word, into hieroglyphic designs which, contrary to Ficino's argument, consisted always of several symbols, never of one alone. Even the famous compound of anchor and dolphin for *festina tarde* was not left to itself, but juxtaposed to a circle, for *semper*, so as to produce a discursive sequence: 'semper festina tarde' (fig. 46). In an instructive woodcut from the *Weisskunig*, in which Burgkmair represents himself as painting hieroglyphs under the dictation of Maximilian (Burkhard no. 125, pl. 45), the canvas is filled with eleven symbols. To suggest that their meaning, hitherto undisclosed, is meant to be grasped 'in a flash', is a *reductio ad absurdum* of that theory. Dürer's *Mysterium der aegyptischen Buchstaben*, designed as a eulogy of Maximilian, is a compound of thirteen separate hieroglyphs corresponding to 'every single phrase in Pirckheimer's Latin and Stabius's German text' (Panofsky, *Dürer* I, p. 177). The disturbing effect of the crowded design recalls the *ars memorativa*, and may have been intended, in this particular instance, to serve the same purpose, cf. above, p. 32 note 1.

any figure tends to engender others, they abhor isolation; which explains why the mystical language grows so easily luxuriant, and produces the kind of cumulative verbiage which disfigures many Neoplatonic tracts, and often carries over into visual imagery.[1] The Neoplatonic discipline tried to restrain and direct the unruly impulse without depriving it of its poetry. The contraction and expansion of metaphors were subjected to a few simple dialectical rules which were to secure a rich but reasonable 'genealogy of the gods', a succession of steps which, broadening downward and narrowing toward the top, promised ecstasy while advising prudence.

'Now the Supreme, because within it are no differences,' says Plotinus in the sixth *Ennead*, 'is eternally present; but we achieve such presence only when our differences are lost. . . . We have at all times our centre There, though we do not at all times look Thither. We are like a company of singing dancers, who may turn their gaze outward and away, notwithstanding they have the choirmaster for centre; but when they are turned towards him, then they sing true and are truly centred upon him. Even so we encircle the Supreme always, and when we break the circle, it shall be our utter dissolution and cessation of being; but our eyes are not at all times fixed upon the Centre. Yet in the vision thereof is our attainment and our repose and the end of all discord, God in his dancers and God the true Centre of the dance.'[2]

There is no question, though, that in the absence of discretion a perfunctory handling of the Orphic rules could change a poet into a pedant. In the *Faerie Queene* the 'unfolding' of Agape into her three sons (IV, ii, 41–3) is no more than a didactic exercise. The three Graces could hardly have been more circumspect in their dance than these three knights are in the display of their martial equipment; but the fatuity of the verses notwithstanding, it may be instructive, as a schoolroom lesson in mystical 'explication', to quote them here in full:

Amongst those knights there were three brethren bold,
Three bolder brethren never were yborn,
Born of one mother in one happy mold,
Born at one burden in one happy morn;

[1] A characteristic example is a double triad engraved by Robetta (Hind, *Early Italian Engraving*, no. D.II.33, pl. 296), which goes under the wrong title *The Choice of Hercules*, although the sky in the picture is filled with *amoretti* and *erotes* swinging arrows and strewing flowers, which does not fit Xenophon's moral in the least. In both triads Voluptas and Amor clearly outweigh the solitary Virtus, whose chastity is parodied by the 'chaste book' which covers one of the frivolous Graces. Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege*, pp. 104 f. (pl. 48), after an inconclusive attempt to vindicate the traditional title, dismisses the engraving (p. 144) as 'eine ziemlich wilde Kompilation'.

[2] *Enneads* VI, ix, 8, tr. Dodds.

Thrice happy mother, and thrice happy morn,
That bore three such, three such not to be found;
Her name was Agape *whose children werne*
All three as one, the first hight Priamond,
The second Diamond, *the youngest* Triamond.

Stout Priamond, *but not so strong to strike,*
Strong Diamond, *but not so stout a knight,*
But Triamond *was stout and strong alike:*
On horseback used Triamond *to fight,*
And Priamond *on foot had more delight,*
But horse and foot knew Diamond *to wield:*
With curtax used Diamond *to smite,*
And Triamond *to handle spear and shield,*
But spear and curtax both us'd Priamond *in field.*

These three did love each other dearly well,
And with so firm affection were allied,
As if but one soul in them all did dwell,
Which did her power into three parts divide;
Like three fair branches budding far and wide,
That from one root deriv'd their vital sap:
And like that root, that does her life divide,
Their mother was, and had full blessed hap,
These three so noble babes to bring forth at one clap.

But if Spenser seems unduly obvious in tracing the logic of 'unfolding', he is also quite fearless in tracing the reverse, the 'infolding' of opposites into one. The goddess of Concord, whom he encounters at the entrance to the temple of Venus (IV, x, 31–6), he finds attended by Love and Hate,

Begotten by two fathers of one mother,
Though of contrary natures each to other.

And the veiled statue of Venus herself, in whom these contraries are united (IV, x, 41), is mysteriously described by the poet as Hermaphrodite:

The cause why she was covered with a veil,
Was hard to know, for that her priests the same
From people's knowledge labour'd to conceal.

But sooth it was not sure for womanish shame,
Nor any blemish, which the work might blame;
But for, they say, she hath both kinds in one,
Both male and female, both under one name:
She sire and mother is herself alone,
Begets and eke conceives, nor needeth other none.[1]

It might be thought that at this point the Renaissance mystic had really surrendered to 'the abominations of the heathen': the barbarous belief, that the monstrous is higher and more divine than the normal, would seem to be impossible to reconcile, even by the most dexterous of poetic theologians, with the Judeo-Christian code of propriety. And yet, any reader of Ezekiel or the book of Revelations will know that their accounts are filled with miracles and visions which would sustain the anti-classical faith that, when God appears to His prophets, His supernatural powers are displayed through monstrous apparitions. The hope that the transition from the One to the Many might take place 'simply' and 'normally' would have to dispense with the supreme disproportion between Pan and Proteus, with that 'friendly enmity' in the universe, of which Pico said that without it there would be no creation but only God.[2] In the Bible itself, the transition from the singular to the plural is mysteriously abrupt in Genesis i, 27: 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.' Philo and Origen inferred from this passage —and their authority ranked high with Renaissance Platonists[3]—that the first and original man was androgynous; that the division into male and female belonged to a later and lower state of creation; and that, when all created things return to their maker, the unfolded and divided state of man will be re-infolded in the divine essence.[4]

Pico, who had expounded in the *Commento* that man was originally of a Janus-nature, eagerly seized on Origen's interpretation. 'It is not without mystery (*non item vacat mysterio*)', he wrote in the *Heptaplus* on Genesis i, 27, 'that He created man

[1] Mythographical sources for the *Venus biformis* in Gyraldus I, 394 f.; also Cartari, s.v. 'Venere barbata'.

[2] *Commento*, quoted above, p. 83.

[3] Wind, 'The Revival of Origen', *loc. cit.*, pp. 412–24. For the revival of Philo see the comprehensive bibliography by H. L. Goodhart and E. R. Goodenough, appended to Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus* (1938), pp. 125–321, particularly pp. 180 f., 'Codices containing the Latin translation of Lilius Typhernas', and pp. 308 f., 'Mention of Philo in Printed Books of the Fifteenth Century', nos. 1508–79.

[4] Origen, *In Genesim* I, 15 (*Patr. Graec.* XII, 158): 'Videamus autem etiam per allegoriam quomodo ad imaginem Dei homo factus masculus et femina est', etc. *In Canticum Canticorum* II, xi (*ibid.* XIII, 134) on Adam as prophet of the *magnum mysterium*: 'et erunt ambo in carne una' (Christus-Ecclesia). A related statement in Augustine, *De Trinitate* XII, vii. For the Jewish-Platonic exegesis, from which Origen's view derives in part, see Philo, *De opificio mundi* 76; *Quis rerum divinarum heres* 164, both with reference to Genesis i, 27 as proof of the androgynous Adam. On 'creation by dichotomy' see above, p. 166 note 2.

[the celestial Adam] male and female. For it is the prerogative of celestial souls that they fulfil simultaneously the two functions of mental contemplation and of physical care, without either of them obstructing or impeding the other. And the ancients in particular, as we may observe also in the Orphic Hymns, adopted the custom of designating these two forces inherent in the same substance . . . by the names of male and female.'[1] In *De occulta philosophia*, Agrippa of Nettesheim listed the Orphic and Hermetic passages at which Pico had merely hinted:[2] and Leone Ebreo added, in the *Dialoghi d'amore*, that Aristophanes' fable of the 'androgynous man' was 'translated' from the Bible: 'male and female created he them'.[3] Perhaps it should also be mentioned here that in alchemy the Hermaphrodite, called *Rebis*, represents the apex of transmutation; which accounts for his regular appearance in alchemical books—in Paracelsus, 'Trismosin', or 'Basil Valentine'. But as Bidez observed when he urged the compiling of a Catalogue of Alchemical Manuscripts,[4] alchemical symbols are a deposit—perhaps the *caput mortuum*?—of Neoplatonism; and Cumont's *disciples infidèles de Plotin* are the lineal ancestors of Paracelsus.

But it would be false to conclude this account without referring, however elliptically, to Donne, because he managed to distil and assimilate the mystical tradition so completely to his own spirit that he created it afresh, both as a poet and as a religious critic, thus rescuing it from degradation. Paracelsus, Cusanus, Pico della Mirandola, not to forget 'our singular Origen', are repeatedly cited in the writings of Donne.[5] And from Donne's whimsical remark about 'Gregory's and Bede's spectacles, by which one saw Origen, who deserved so well of the Christian Church, burning in Hell',[6] it would seem certain that he approved of Pico's defence of Origen in the *Disputatio de Origenis salute*. In the humorous portrait which Donne drew of Pico in the *Catalogus librorum*, the

[1] *Heptaplus* II, vi (Garin, p. 242).

[2] *De occulta philosophia* III, viii, p. 222: '[Mercurius Trismegistus] vocat etiam deum utriusque sexus foecunditate plenissimum . . . et Orpheus naturam mundi Iovemque mundanum marem simul appellat et foeminam: adseritque utrunque diis sexum inesse. Hinc in Hymnis Minervam sic alloquitur: Vir quidem et foemina producta es. Et Apuleius in libro quem scripsit de Mundo, ex Orphica theologia hunc versiculum traduxit de Iove: Iuppiter et mas est et foemina, nescia mortis.' For other late antique parallels see Dieterich, *Abraxas*, p. 79, with reference to Servius, *In Aeneidem* IV, 638; Nock, *Conversion*, pp. 115 f., after a document preserved in Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* V: 'It expounds the content of various legends on the first man, throws light on the triple nature of the soul from "Assyrian mysteries" . . . and refers to Phrygian, Egyptian, and Greek mysteries, the Phrygian and the Greek both giving the concept of a bisexual Heavenly Man.'

[3] '. . . la favola è tradutta da . . . la sacra istoria di Moïse de la creazione. . . . Maschio e femina creò essi.' *Dialoghi d'amore*, ed. Caramella, pp. 291 f.

[4] Cf. above, p. 16 note 4.

[5] A few examples chosen at random from *Essays in Divinity* (ed. E. M. Simpson, 1952): Origen, pp. 8, 25, 45; Cusanus, p. 9; Pico, pp. 10, 13 f.; Paracelsus, p. 11. Other or similar examples could be drawn from *Biothanatos*, *Pseudo-Martyr*, *LXXX Sermons*, *Catalogus librorum*, *Ignatius his Conclave*, or the *Letters*. On Paracelsian images in Donne's poetry, see W. A. Murray, 'Donne and Paracelsus', *Review of English Studies* XXV (1949), pp. 115–23.

[6] *Ignatius his Conclave*, in John Donne, *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, ed. J. Hayward (1936), p. 363.

'Judaeo-Christian Pythagoras' is engaged in demonstrating the coincidence of opposites by an irresistibly felicitous image: he proves 'the numbers 66 and 99 to be identical if you hold the leaf upside down.'[1] But the doctrine here ridiculed by Donne is one to which he himself was so passionately committed that he engraved it on his tomb. In the Latin epitaph he composed for himself, HIC LICET IN OCCIDUO CINERE ASPICIT EUM CUIUS NOMEN EST ORIENS,[2] the words *oriens* and *occiduus* answer each other, meeting like 'the farthest East and the farthest West'[3]—'so death doth touch the Resurrection.'[4]

There I should see a sun, by rising set,
And by that setting endless day beget.[5]

On the word *oriens*, East, he wrote a curious commentary in which he explained it as a name with two opposite prophetic meanings: '*Oriens nomen eius*, the East is one of Christ's names in one prophet; and *Filius Orientis est Lucifer*, the East is one of the devil's names in another, and these two differ diametrically.'[6] (In the epitaph the use of the indicative *aspicit* might seem strangely positive in a dying man, writing about himself: for how could Donne feel assured of the beatific vision? But if *cuius nomen est Oriens* refers alternatively to the Lord of Heaven whom Donne hoped to face, and to the doom of hell, then the indicative mode is right.) To evoke by one word these contradictory prospects is perhaps the *non plus ultra* of dialectical suspense; but in writing *To Mr Tilman after he had taken orders*, Donne did not shrink from claiming for his own profession the 'prerogative' of Pico's celestial Adam:

How brave are those who with their engines can
Bring man to heaven, and heaven again to man . . .
Both these in thee are in thy calling knit
And make thee now a blest Hermaphrodite.

[1] *Catalogus librorum*, ed. E. M. Simpson (1930), p. 32. Donne's admiration of Pico, it should be remembered, was never uncritical. The principle of the whole in the part, for example, by which Pico, in the *Heptaplus*, 'found all Moses's learning in every verse of Moses', Donne rejected as bad exegesis. 'Since our merciful God hath afforded us the whole and entire book, why should we tear it into rags, or rend the seamless garment?' (*Essays in Divinity*, p. 14). But *contradictoria coincidunt in natura uniali* was to him, as to Pico, the ultimate wisdom, and from that opinion he never varied. How the perfect parody quoted above, which concerns the very part of Pico's doctrine of which Donne approved, could have suggested to a reader of Donne an 'apparent reversal of opinion on Pico della Mirandola' (C. M. Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, 1937, p. 248) is difficult to understand. Surely, men less brilliant and paradoxical than Donne have enjoyed parodies of doctrines they held in esteem.

[2] Izaak Walton, *The Life of Dr. John Donne* (Oxford 1950), p. 79.

[3] Letter to Sir Robert Ker (Gosse, *Life and Letters* II, 1898, p. 191); also in *LXXX Sermons*, no. 55, cf. *The Divine Poems*, ed. H. Gardner (1952), p. 108.

[4] *Hymn to God my God, in my sickness.*

[5] *Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward.*

[6] Letter to Sir Robert Ker, *loc. cit.*

CHAPTER XIV

THE CONCEALED GOD

The doctrine that Pan is hidden in Proteus, that mutability is the secret gate through which the universal invades the particular, deserves credit for a peculiar philosophic achievement: it supplied a cogent mystical justification for an eminently sensible state of mind. 'It is written', Cusanus said, 'that God is hidden from the eyes of all sages.'[1] But because the ultimate One is thus invisible, His visible manifestations must be manifold. Poetic pluralism is the necessary corollary to the radical mysticism of the One. To Renaissance Platonists, as to Plato himself, a generous and varied use of metaphor was essential to the proper worship of the ineffable god. 'All these names', wrote Cusanus about the many names given to the deity by the pagans, 'are but the unfolding of the one ineffable name, and in so far as the name truly belonging to God is infinite, it embraces innumerable such names derived from particular perfections. Hence the unfolding of the divine name is multiple, and always capable of increase, and each single name is related to the true and ineffable name as the finite is related to the infinite.'[2]

Although stated in the terminology of the *Docta ignorantia*, the argument echoes a view current among ancient Neoplatonists: 'I have been initiated into many sacred mysteries in Greece,' said Apuleius, 'I learned worship on worship, rites beyond number, and various ceremonies in my zeal for truth and in my dutifulness to the gods.'[3] The same praise was bestowed on Proclus by Marinus,[4] on Julian by Libanius;[5] and before them Philo had extended the same principle to a multiple Hebrew revelation: 'If ye meet with any of the initiated, press him closely and cling to him lest he conceal from you some newer Mystery. Cling to him until ye have mastered it clearly. For I myself have been initiated by the God-beloved Moses into the Greater Mysteries. Yet when I saw the prophet Jeremiah and recognized that he was not only an initiate but a capable hierophant, I did not shrink from his company.'[6]

[1] *De ludo globi* II (*Opera*, 1514, fol. 166[r]).
[2] *De docta ignorantia* I, xxv.
[3] *Apologia* 55; cf. Nock, *Conversion*, pp. 114 f.
[4] *Vita Procli* xix.
[5] Nock, *loc. cit.* See also Julian, *Orationes* VII, 237A.
[6] *De cherubim* 48 f., tr. Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, p. 231.

The charge has been made that these philosophers were rather illogical in their desire 'to be initiated into as many mysteries as possible', because 'logically, on the theory that the various divine names belonged to one unity, one mystery might suffice.'[1] But logically, exactly the opposite premise was assumed by the Neoplatonists; namely, that multiple revelation is the necessary counterpart to 'the One beyond Being'. With some justice they argued that a belief in the unique revelation of the One would be contrary to Plato's teaching. The *Symposium* had warned against worshipping transcendent Beauty in one embodiment only; and in the *Parmenides* and the *Seventh Letter* Plato fought the danger of thus getting caught, by introducing the method of διαγωγή, the running through of all the possible alternatives of asserting and denying the One in the Many. The pathos of the Platonic position was expressed with remarkable force by Maximus of Tyre when he concluded his defence of idols by an invocation of the hidden God:

'God Himself, the father and fashioner of all that is, older than the Sun or the Sky, greater than time and eternity and all the flow of being, is unnameable by any lawgiver, unutterable by any voice, not to be seen by any eye. But we, being unable to apprehend His essence, use the help of sounds and names and pictures, of beaten gold and ivory and silver, of plants and rivers, mountain-peaks and torrents, yearning for the knowledge of Him, and in our weakness naming all that is beautiful in this world after His nature—just as happens to earthly lovers. To them the most beautiful sight will be the actual lineaments of the beloved, but for remembrance' sake they will be happy in the sight of a lyre, a little spear, a chair, perhaps, or a running-ground, or anything in the world that wakens the memory of the beloved. Why should I further examine and pass judgment about Images? Let men know what is divine (τὸ θεῖον γένος), let them know; that is all. If a Greek is stirred to the remembrance of God by the art of Pheidias, an Egyptian by paying worship to animals, another man by a river, another by fire—I have no anger for their divergences; only let them know, let them love, let them remember.'[2]

Very much the same reasoning pervades Cusanus's *De pace seu concordantia fidei.* Although indispensable to a finite mind, no finite image or ritual, he argued, can be adequate to represent the infinite. But the recognition that 'between the finite and the infinite there is no middle', should not only humble the believer but also supply him with a key to religious peace; for while all religions agree in acknowledging the

[1] Nock, *loc. cit.* Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (1951), p. 77 note 1.

[2] *Philosophumena*, ed. Hobein, II, 10; tr. Gilbert

infinite, it is only in the finite that their differences arise. *Una religio in rituum varietate.*[1] The finite perfections of each rite, which are the cause of its collision with other rites, conceal and imply an infinite perfection, of which they are limited symbols. 'The signs vary, but not the signified.'[2]

In meditating on the 'face of God' (*De visione Dei*) Cusanus marvelled, without distress, at the many different faces ascribed to God by his votaries. 'If the lion were to ascribe thee a face, he would imagine the face of a lion, the ox would imagine that of an ox, the eagle, of an eagle.[3] Oh Lord, how marvellous is thy face, which youths cannot conceive but as youthful, men but as manly, and the aged as aged! . . . Oh marvellous face, whose beauty all those who see it are insufficient to admire! The face of faces is veiled in all faces and seen in a riddle. Unveiled it is not found until one has entered, beyond all visions, into a state of secret and hidden silence, in which nothing is left of knowing or imagining a face. For so long as this obscurity is not reached, this cloud, this darkness—that is, the ignorance into which he who seeks thy face enters when he transcends all knowledge and understanding—so long can thy face be encountered only veiled. This darkness itself, however, reveals that it is here, in the transcending of all veils, that the face is present. . . . And the more densely the darkness is felt, the truer and closer is the approach, by virtue of this darkness, to the invisible light.'[4]

The union of contraries in the 'absconded God', whose blinding light is impenetrable darkness,[5] is repeated by the multifarious 'visions of God' in minor and more imperfect degrees. Hence Cusanus did not object to polytheism, or to the polymorphic views of the deity.[6] Like Proclus he regarded them as preparatory stages of initiation. 'Those who are introduced into the mysteries,' wrote Proclus, 'at first meet with manifold and multiform gods, but being entered and thoroughly initiated, . . . they participate the very Deity.'[7] In *De ludo globi* Cusanus compared this law of

[1] *De pace seu concordantia fidei*, § 1.

[2] *Ibid.*, § 17.

[3] The animals mentioned (lion, ox, and eagle) are symbols of the evangelists Mark, Luke, and John. The mention of these three brings to mind the symbol of the fourth, Matthew, which is 'a man'; and the passage actually opens with the phrase 'Homo non potest iudicare nisi humaniter.' But while recalling the evangelists through the biblical tetramorph (cf. Ezekiel i, 10), the argument was modelled after a famous fragment of Xenophanes: 'If oxen and lions had hands and could make images, they would fashion their gods as oxen and lions' (fr. 15).

[4] *De visione Dei* vi: 'De visione faciali'.

[5] 'Thy throne is darkness in the abyss of light, / A blaze of glory that forbids the sight.' Dryden, *The Hind and the Panther* I, 66 ff.

[6] *De docta ignorantia* I, xxv; *De pace*, § 6. Cf. Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*, p. 32.

[7] *Theologia Platonica* I, ii; a masterly summary of this passage in Berkeley, *Siris*, § 333. In Book II of More's *Utopia*, public worship, in 'somewhat dark' churches ('howbeit that was not done through ignorance of building but, as they say, by the counsel of the priests'), is addressed to the absconded God alone. 'They call upon no peculiar name of God, but only Mithra. In the which word they all agree together in one nature of the divine majesty, whatsoever it be.' The choice of the name seems to have been suggested by Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 46 (*Moralia* 369E): '. . . and midway between the two

regression, from many outward images to the inward One, with a law of nature observed by Aristotle. 'Elemental forces, according to Aristotle, have the smallest extension and the greatest power. . . . The force inherent in a spark is that of the whole fire. . . . A small seed has the strength of many grains. . . . The core of the apparent is in the occult, the outward depends on the inward. The skins and crusts are there because of the muscles and marrow, and these because of the invisible force that is concealed in them.'[1]

Erasmus repeated the argument in the *Adagia*, under the heading *Sileni Alcibiadis*: 'Thus the most important is always the least conspicuous. A tree flatters the eye with flowers and foliage, and exhibits the massiveness of its trunk: but the seed, from which these have their strength, what a small thing it is, and how hidden. . . . Gold and gems have been concealed by Nature in the recesses of the earth. . . . What is most divine and immortal in man is inaccessible to perception. . . . And also in the temperament of the physical body, while phlegm and blood are familiar to the senses and tangible, that which contributes most to life is least patent, namely the spirit. And in the Universe the greatest things are invisible, like the so-called separate substances. And the supreme among these is furthest removed. . . . God, unintelligible and unthinkable because He is the unique source of all.'

* * * * *

In order to guide the mind toward the hidden God, Cusanus invented experiments in metaphor, semi-magical exercises which would solemnly entertain and astonish the beholder. These serious games (*serio ludere*) consisted in finding within common experience an unusual object endowed with the kind of contradictory attributes which are difficult to imagine united in the deity. The motionless eye of God, for instance, is said to follow us everywhere. But can an eye stay at rest while it moves? In *De visione Dei* Cusanus observed that if in the painting of a head the eyes are fixed on the spectator—and having seen heads painted in that fashion, he supplied the reader with an icon of this kind[2]—the eyes will follow the spectator through a room without

[i.e. 'light' on the one hand, 'darkness and ignorance' on the other] is Mithras; for this reason the Persians give to Mithras the name of "Mediator" ' (tr. Babbitt). On other sources about Mithras known to the Renaissance see Gyraldus I, 232 f., s.v. 'Mithras'. More's remark about dark churches is resumed by Donne: 'Churches are best for prayer, that have least light: / To see God only, I go out of sight.' *A Hymn to Christ, at the author's last going into Germany.*

[1] *De ludo globi* II, *loc. cit.* Also Ficino, *Theologia Platonica* VI, ii (*Opera*, pp. 161 f.).

[2] Although Cusanus included the picture of an archer among his examples, and also an ill-described panel which has caused a lively debate as to whether or not it showed a self-portrait of Roger van der Weyden (cf. recently Panofsky, 'Facies illa Rogeri maximi pictoris', *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honour of A. M. Friend, Jr.*, 1955, pp. 392–400, with further literature), there is no doubt that the icon which accompanied the treatise sent to the monks of Tegernsee was an image of Christ. See preface: 'Ne tamen deficiatis in praxi, quae sensibilem talem exigit figuram, quam habere

moving. If there are several spectators in the room, each will feel the eyes looking at him. And yet, although the eyes in the painting appear to see all and everything (*figura cuncta videntis*), it is obvious that they do not move. Of a comparable nature, we may conjecture, is the mystical 'eye of God', in which motion and rest coincide. In *De beryllo* Cusanus chose a lens, and in *De ludo globi* a newly invented toy, to show how immanence and transcendence may be combined, how an object within the world can embrace the world from without, and how the overwhelming paradoxes of God's 'absent presence' can be reflected in a harmless game, in the throwing of a bowl which runs with a bias and must be propelled slantingly to come out straight, or in the spinning of a top which, when it comes to a stand, combines a state of rest with the greatest speed of rotation.[1] Several of these paradoxes recur in a masque by Ben Jonson, in which the Sphinx proposes the following riddle to Cupid:

First, Cupid, you must cast about
To find a world the world without,
Wherein what's done, the eye doth do;
And is the light and treasure too.
This eye still moves, and still is fix'd,
And in the pow'rs thereof are mix'd
Two contraries; which time, till now,
Nor fate knew where to join, or how.
Yet, if you hit the right upon,
You must resolve these, all, by one.[2]

Had the riddle been proposed to an immediate disciple of Cusanus, he would have answered 'God', or perhaps an 'icon' of God, a beryl, or a game of bowls. But for a Cupid addressing the court of James I, God's icon was present in the person of the king, and the Sphinx aimed no higher than patriotism:

potui charitati vestrae mitto tabellam, figuram cuncta videntis tenentem, quam eiconam dei appello.' In some manuscripts of the treatise, and in letters relating to it, such images of Christ were inserted, either in the type of an *Ecce Homo* or of *Veronica's Napkin*. They are listed in E. Bohnenstaedt's translation *Von Gottes Sehen* (1944), p. 163 note 4.

[1] Cusanus described the 'beryl' as a white transparent stone cut in the shape of a lens which by uniting the opposites, concave and convex, enlarges our vision. In *De ludo globi* the game consists in throwing a spheroid or bowl, oblate on one side and prolate on the other. The association of this game with the *Tarocchi* (proposed by Brockhaus and quoted by Hind, *Early Italian Engraving* I, pp. 221 ff.) is mistaken, since it is obviously not a game of cards. Its didacticism is strictly mechanical, how to make a slanted propulsion come out straight. 'Haec est vis mystica ludi,' says Cusanus, 'studioso exercitio posse etiam curvum globum regulari, ut post instabiles flexiones motus in regno vitae quiescat.' The moral of spinning a top is discussed by Cusanus in *De possest*. Combined with more hackneyed moral precepts, both games recur in Francis Quarles's *Emblems* (1635), I, 5 and 10. From a recent study of Renaissance games of perspective it appears that some of them are based on the same principle as Cusanus's games, 'l'égalité est obtenue par l'inégal, et la stabilité par l'ébranlement' (J. Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphoses ou Perspectives curieuses*, 1955, p. 7).

[2] *Love freed from Ignorance and Folly*.

'Tis done! 'tis done! I've found it out—
Britain's the world the world without.
The king's the eye, as we do call
The sun the eye of this great all.
And is the light and treasure too;
For 'tis his wisdom all doth do.
Which still is fixed in his breast,
Yet still doth move to guide the rest.
The contraries which time till now
Nor fate knew where to join, or how,
Are Majesty and Love; which there,
And no where else, have their true sphere.
Now, Sphinx, I've hit the right upon,
And do resolve these all by one:
That is, that you meant Albion.

The transference of divine traits to King and Country need not detain or disturb us here. It is a familiar subject. The interest of this particular example is that it still retains the mystical arguments of Cusanus to the letter, but already anticipates the outlook of that emancipated trimmer who drew consolation from the British climate.

A direct line of descent from Cusanus to Halifax would require some audacious interpolations; but it is safe to infer that there actually were some historical links between them. Not only was the knowledge of Cusanus spread in England by the visit of Giordano Bruno, but there were other vehicles besides. The correspondence between Harvey and Spenser, for example, shows that they were studying the works of Gianfrancesco Pico, which abound in quotations from Cusanus.[1] And since Lefèvre d'Etaples had edited and published Cusanus in France,[2] the knowledge of his doctrines and method in England did not have to rely exclusively on Italian sources.[3] Donne found Cusanus's *Cribratio Alchorani* in a collection of tracts prefaced by Luther.[4]

[1] See above, p. 53 note 2; p. 58 note 5.

[2] Paris (Badius) 1514, ed. Faber Stapulensis. The preface, fol. aa ii^{v}, draws an illuminating parallel between Cusanus and Pacioli. By a curious coincidence, a physician from Pavia, named Niccolò Cusano, is also mentioned in Pacioli's *Divina proportione*, but since Pacioli says that he took part in a learned assembly at Milan on 9 February 1498, he was alive thirty-four years after the great Cusanus's death. The identity of names has caused occasional confusions, set right in Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*, p. 54 note 2, but newly confounded in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XVI (1953), p. 302. On Cusanus in France, with particular reference to Faber Stapulensis, see A. Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris* (1953), pp. 661–5, cf. also Index, s.v. 'Cues'.

[3] Cusanus is mentioned, for example, in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563); cf. F. A. Yates, 'Queen Elizabeth as Astraea', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* X (1947), p. 43.

[4] Quoted in *Essays in Divinity*, p. 9.

But subsidiary influences notwithstanding,[1] Bruno's *Eroici furori*, with its dedication to Sidney, played a crucial role in 'naturalizing' the coincidence of opposites among Elizabethan writers. The book includes, under the heading *manens moveor*,[2] an emblem for the coincidence of motion and rest with which Ben Jonson's sphinx entertained her audience; and even 'the world outside the world' is already interpreted by Bruno as a compliment to England. The biblical 'separation of the waters' is associated by him with Elizabeth's island kingdom, governed by the influx of 'the prime intelligence which is like Diana among the nymphs.' These sacred waters, Bruno says, 'are not to be found on the continent of the world but *penitus toto divisim ab orbe*.'[3] They derive their supreme virtue from the secluded position of the British Isles, which seemed 'out of the world' to Virgil's shepherd:

Et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos.

(*Eclogues* I, 66)

By the time of Halifax, this famous phrase was trimmed. The seal of Charles II, which shows him as ruler of the sea, bears the altered legend:

Et penitus toto regnantes orbe Britannos.[4]

But could that proud emendation have been designed to supplant the memory of Virgil's verse? Did its effect not rather depend on evoking it? That *divisos* was the clue to *regnantes* was not too esoteric a lesson for Charles's minister. Halifax, imbued with a contrapositive spirit of statecraft, ascribed the world-power of Britain to its isolation. 'Happy confinement that has made us free. . . . It is no paradox to say that England

[1] Since those who were interested in Neoplatonic texts, knew either Latin or Italian or both, the English translations are not a safe criterion of popularity. Pico was of course, as Donne put it, 'happier in no one thing in this life than in the author which writ it to us'; namely, Thomas More. Still, the *Commento* did not appear in English, under the title *A Platonic Discourse on Love*, until 1651, translated by Thomas Stanley, who also included it in his *History of Philosophy* II (1656), pp. 94–118. A translation of Cusanus's *De visione Dei* by Giles Randall was published in 1646 under the suggestive title *The Single Eye*; and the *Idiota*, 'by the famous and learned Cusanus', appeared in English in 1650. Pico's *Heptaplus*, however, had been accessible in French since 1579 together with Francesco Giorgio's *Harmonia mundi*, translated by Nicolas and Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie, and published in one volume, a combination which may possibly account for the close association of these two books in Donne's mind (e.g. *Essays in Divinity*, p. 10), although, as Garin recently observed in his introduction to the *Heptaplus* (*ed. cit.*, p. 32 note 3; also 'Noterelle di filosofia del Rinascimento', *Rinascita* IV, 1941, pp. 419 f.), the historical connexion between Pico and Francesco Giorgio is in fact very intimate. Chiefly known to historians of art because of his musico-architectural expertise on how to build the church of San Francesco della Vigna in Venice (Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur*, pp. 224, 226 with further literature; now also Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, 1949, pp. 90–4), Francesco Giorgio, a Venetian Franciscan, transmitted his veneration for Pico to his pupil Arcangelo da Borgonuovo, another Franciscan, who wrote a defence and explanation of Pico's cabbalistic theses. Cf. Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala*, pp. 25 ff., 119 f., 153 (s.v. 'Puteus').

[2] *Eroici furori* II, i, 5.

[3] *Ibid.*, dedication.

[4] See Warburg, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike* I, pp. 258, 393.

has its root in the sea, and a deep one too, from whence it sendeth its branches into both the Indies.'[1]

It has since become habitual to say that England owes her central part in the balance of power to her marginal position. As in Cusanus's *Experiments with the Scales*, 'one pound can counterbalance a thousand pounds by its distance from the centre of the scales.'[2] But while that paradox has tended to harden into a dangerous political commonplace, Cusanus, primarily interested in theology, derived it from a more general and queer-sounding postulate; namely, that periphery and centre are interchangeable in God. Like many other Renaissance thinkers Cusanus had a liking for the pseudo-Hermetic image which compares God to an infinite sphere whose circumference is nowhere and whose centre is everywhere;[3] and in so far as 'everywhere' and 'nowhere' amount to the same, the contraries of periphery and centre become interchangeable.[4] God is in all the world, that is, in the smallest part of it; and yet all of the world is also in God, since he embraces and transcends it. Maximum and minimum are one.[5] By pushing the contraries to their extremes Cusanus thought that he made them vanish; but whatever may be said against his claim on the grounds of logic, it has been pragmatically confirmed on at least one point: the conclusions of the extreme mysticism of Cusanus agree with the observations of practical politics. To be placed outside a political situation is to occupy a privileged position within it. As transcendence and inherence coincide in God, so the central position of a worldly power is often secured by its eccentricity.[6]

[1] 'The Trimmer's Opinion in relation to Things Abroad', *op. cit.*, pp. 68 f., is as unmistakable on that point as Halifax's *Rough Draught of a New Model at Sea* (1694).

[2] *De staticis experimentis* (*Opera*, 1514, fol. 98[v]).

[3] Cusanus, *De docta ignorantia* I, xii (cf. ed. Hoffmann-Klibansky, p. 25 note 11); Ficino, *Theologia Platonica* XVIII, iii, *Opera*, p. 403; Francesco Giorgio, *Harmonia mundi* I, iii, 2. Among Neoplatonists the figure had become a commonplace, long before Pascal made it even more famous; cf. D. Mahnke, *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt* (1937). Thomas Browne was not entirely wrong in calling it 'Trismegistus his circle' in *Christian Morals* III, ii, and referring to it as 'that allegorical description of Hermes' in *Religio medici* I, x, with marginal note, 'sphaera cuius centrum ubique, circumferentia nullibi'; for it occurs for the first time in the *Liber XXIV philosophorum* (ed. C. Baeumker, *Studien und Charakteristiken zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, 1927, pp. 194–214) as *propositio ii* (*ibid.*, p. 208). Presumably written about 1200, the text bears in Cod. Vat. lat. 3060 and other MSS the inscription *liber . . . qui dicitur Termegisti Philosophi* (*ibid.*, p. 207), and is quoted as Trismegistus not only by St Bonaventura and St Thomas (*ibid.*, p. 201), but also by Francesco Giorgio, *loc. cit.*, and other Renaissance authors. Donne, who meditated on the image in the *Devotions* (ed. J. Sparrow, 1923, p. 4), parodied it in the *Catalogus librorum* no. 5 (ed. Simpson, p. 31).

[4] According to Cusanus, *op. cit.*, I, xxi, the centre and the periphery of an infinite circle are exchangeable also with its diameter.

[5] *Ibid.* I, ii, iv, xvi; II, iii.

[6] It would be of interest to examine Cusanus's politics in relation to his metaphysics. Like Halifax, he could easily be called inconstant because he seemed to trim his sails to the wind; but Macaulay's defence of Halifax supplies an adequate answer: 'As well might the pole star be called inconstant because it is sometimes to the east and sometimes to the west of the pointers.' Cusanus's shift from the Council of Basle to the Eugenian party, or from a tolerant to an intransigent policy toward the 'Bohemian heretics', is perhaps less revealing than his explicit statement, in the Epilogue to the *De docta ignorantia*,

But Halifax would not have been pleased to hear his policy defended by such reasonings. He had no taste for 'the frenzy of Platonic visions'. Bruno's triumphant demonstration in the *Eroici furori* 'that there is no difference between the most evident and the most concealed, between the beginning and the end, between the most lucid height and the profoundest abyss, between infinite power and infinite act',[1] would only have brought to his mind a verse from *Hudibras:*

The extremes of glory and of shame
Like east and west become the same.[2]

Halifax's own metaphysics of trimming was less extravagant. He was satisfied to observe 'that our climate is a trimmer between that part of the world where men are roasted, and the other where they are frozen; that our Church is a trimmer between the frenzy of Platonic visions and the lethargic ignorance of popish dreams; that our laws are trimmers between the excess of unbounded power and the extravagance of liberty not enough restrained; that true virtue has ever been thought a trimmer and to have its dwelling in the middle between the two extremes; that even God Almighty himself is divided between his two great attributes, his mercy and his justice.'[3]

In the last sentence the word 'divided', which Halifax extends to 'even God Almighty', would have profoundly offended the Renaissance Neoplatonists. In Cusanus's and Ficino's and Pico's idea of God (and on this point they were sustained by a solid theological tradition) the opposites of justice and mercy coincide. 'Thy anger is love, Thy justice mercy.'[4] It is man's limitation to conceive of them as 'divided'; and as long as he fails to recognize his limitation, man (in the Neoplatonic view) is unable to rise to the idea of God, and falls short of his own perfection. His natural weakness, as a creature below the moon, may force him to alternate and compromise between the opposites, this being a temporal way of mediating between them. Yet the aim of mediation is

that the dialectical principle underlying the book had occurred to him during a diplomatic mission. On the ship which carried him back from Byzantium, where he had helped to persuade the emperor John Palaeologus to embark on a journey to the West for the purpose of reuniting the Greek and Roman Churches, he was vouchsafed an overwhelming intuition into the union of contraries as a universal principle. To what length he was willing to carry this rule, he had the opportunity to show under Pius II: for it was in support of a bold and desperate papal stratagem, that of offering the supreme secular power of Christendom to the conquering sultan, against whom the Christian princes were unwilling to unite, that Cusanus wrote his 'Scrutiny of the Koran' (*Cribratio Alchorani*), a book designed to demonstrate the compatibility of the two conflicting faiths.

[1] *Argomento*, referring to II, v.

[2] *Hudibras* II, i, 271 f. Did Butler intend to travesty Donne's 'physicians grown cosmographers'? 'What shall my West hurt me? As West and East / In all flat maps (and I am one) are one, / So death doth touch the Resurrection.' Donne's geographical illustration of the coincidence of opposites may, incidentally, preserve an original feature of the 'South-west discovery'. The wide-flung speculations on the coincidence of opposites, which are an outstanding feature of Quattrocento thought, may well have prepared the intellectual climate for conceiving of a westward voyage to the East.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

[4] Cusanus, *De pace seu concordantia fidei*, § 1.

union; and while turning his face from one side to the other, the sage should comprise both sides at once. 'Sapiens haud simplex, sed geminus homo est', wrote Bovillus, and pictured the sage as a Janus (*sapiens bifrons*).[1]

The 'character of a trimmer' thus leads us back to the Renaissance 'mystery of Janus' which Pico had cited as a symbol of re-integration, and which Passeri associated with the Aristophanic Man: 'philosophia duce regredimur'. Admittedly, acquisition of completeness in such an extraordinary form is not an easy matter. Mystics who yearn for union with God often fail in circumspection; and prudent men, while they may be skilled in the art of trimming, are rarely propelled by mystical ardours. Yet only those who can combine these two qualities in one person, would be said, at least in some measure, to achieve the Janus-face of perfection, which is to know the invisible God as One, and recognize him in the visible Many. The confident belief of Halifax 'that true virtue has ever been thought a trimmer and to have its dwelling in the middle between the two extremes', applies to every step of the Neoplatonic scale, but not to the scale itself. As Spenser put it, *in medio virtus—in summo felicitas.*[2]

* * * * *

Perhaps it was largely for etymological reasons, because the word 'initiation' suggests a door or gate, a threshold over which the neophyte passes in being admitted to a secret mystery, that Janus, Ovid's celestial 'janitor' who has the power to open and to close,[3] was defined by George Wither, in his book of emblems, as the god of mysteries in general.[4] But with perfectly good religious logic, and with the cunning that distinguishes some of the emblem writers, Wither extended the character of the god to his votaries, and so the double face, originally meant for the janitor who protects the door, was transferred to those whom he lets in:

He that concealèd things will find
Must look before him and behind.

With this rhyme Wither expanded the motto *pando recondita*, and declared himself pleased that prudence in man and omniscience in God should thus both be represented by the same secret figure.[5]

[1] *De sapiente* xxxi. Cf. Cassirer, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

[2] Cf. above, p. 53.

[3] *Fasti* I, 63–288. Cf. Bocchi, *Symbolicae quaestiones*, no. cli: 'Ianitor immensus superis et manibus imis.' How widely this mystery could be expanded is shown by the Janus frieze over the entrance to the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano, a Neoplatonic monument of the first importance, on which André Chastel is preparing a study.

[4] George Wither, *Emblems* (1635), p. 138.

[5] 'In true divinity', Wither explains, ''tis God alone / To whom all hidden things are truly known./ He only is that ever present being / Who, by the virtue of his pow'r all-seeing, / Beholds at one aspect all things that are, / That ever shall be, and that ever were. / But in a moral sense we may apply / This double-face that man to signify / Who, whatsoere he undertakes to do, / Looks both before him and behind him too.'

Not unlike the triadic faces of Prudence, which imitate the divine Trinity,[1] Wither's double-faced Prudence is a vestige of God in man. But like Halifax, Wither told only half the story. The Renaissance mystics were not so timid as to recognize a divine vestige only in a cautious approach to the Ultimate;[2] nor were they so bold as to trust their prudence to the last, and to envisage with equanimity the prospect of meeting the deity face to face. The 'all-seeing eye' which Cusanus introduced as an experimental parable in *De visione Dei*, had also its terrifying aspects; and perhaps no Renaissance hieroglyph conveys a sense of *terribilità* more clearly than the famous 'winged eye', the emblem of Leone Battista Alberti, which appears on his medal with the motto QUID TUM (fig. 65).[3] What does the puzzling figure mean? And what is meant by its Ciceronian motto?

An earlier version of Alberti's emblem showed a bird of prey which has been mistaken for an eagle, but is actually a falcon, again with the inscription QUID TUM.[4] Now the falcon, being associated in the *Hieroglyphica* with Horus and Osiris, was discussed in Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* as a symbol of the deity. 'This bird', he says, 'is distinguished by the sharpness of its vision and the speed of its wings';[5] and it therefore signifies the union of supreme insight and supreme power. The description fits so exactly the later version of Alberti's medal, where the piercing eye and the rapid wings are combined in one cipher, that there is little doubt the meaning is the same, particularly as the inscription has remained unaltered. But not only does the compactness of the hieroglyph single out the two essential traits of the falcon (which in a figure of the whole bird would be suggested only by implication), but the image of an eye with wings brings to mind the ubiquity of the omniscient God, because the word *deus* was illustrated in the *Hieroglyphica* by an eye (fig. 63),[6] while the wings signify *celeritas*.[7] In this

[1] See above, p. 45 note 1.

[2] One hundred years before Wither, the Lyon printing firm De la Porte (Hugo a Porta) had used the emblem of a gate with Janus-head, inscribed *recondita pando*: but there the doors of the gate, instead of being closed, are carried off by a vigorous Samson, whose defiant motto is inscribed on the broken-off portals which he carries on his shoulder and under his arm: *libertatem meam mecum porto*. Both the image of the gate (*porta*) and the act of carrying it (*porto*) were allusions to the printer's name.

[3] Hill, no. 161.

[4] Giehlow, 'Die Hieroglyphenkunde des Humanismus', *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[5] 'Avis nam ea pollet acumine visus et volatus celeritate', *De Iside et Osiride* 51 (*Moralia*, 371E), tr. Xylander, *ed. cit.*, p. 212. 'Pingunt etiam hunc deum accipitris imagine nonnunquam, tum ob visus acumen, tum ob alarum pernicitatem', Calcagnini, *De rebus Aegyptiacis*, in *Opera*, p. 242.

[6] 'Oculo picto Deum intelligebant, quod ut oculus quicquid sibi propositum est intuetur, sic omnia Deus cognoscit ac videt', Horapollo, *Hieroglyphica* (Paris 1551), p. 222; cf. *Hypnerotomachia*, fols. c i^{r}, p vi^{v}, p vii^{r}, q vii^{v}, etc., also Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica* XXXIII, fol. 234.

[7] *Ibid.* XXI ('De accipitre'), fol. 155^{v}. Is it possible that Virgil's *numine afflatur* (cf. above, p. 145) contributed to the formation of Alberti's image? The eye of *deus* could be read hieroglyphically for *numen*; and in Raphael's *Poetry*, which bears the inscription *numine afflatur*, the afflatus is represented by wings. See also Ficino's reference, in *Theologia Platonica* II, x (*Opera*, p. 105), to the 'infinite eye' of the Orphics as a symbol of the divine mind: 'divina mens cum sit infinita, merito nominatur ab Orphicis ἄπειρον ὄμμα, id est, oculus infinitus.'

context the Ciceronian formula *Quid tum* assumes a fearful, eschatological meaning. Cicero used the phrase repeatedly as an expression of oratorical suspense, an exclamation ('What then') which filled a pause and aroused the listener's expectation.[1] But if the *Quid tum* refers to the approach of the God, then the classical phrase of expectation expands into a threatening sense of the *Dies Irae*, the Day of Judgment which, as St Paul said in I Corinthians xv, 52, will come *in ictu oculi*,[2] 'in the twinkling of an eye'.

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?
Quem patronum rogaturus,
Cum vix justus sit securus?

Essential to the threatening effect of Alberti's hieroglyph is the incompatibility of the two components; an eye can focus clearly only from a steady point, its vision being blurred by rapid motion. But here the speed of the wings and the sharpness of vision are united in one supernatural act: *manens moveor*, Omnipresence.

It is worth recording that Karl Giehlow, with his exceptional intuition of Renaissance hieroglyphs, understood the meaning of Alberti's cipher without having found the exactly relevant texts. He did not adduce the passage on the falcon's eye and wings in Plutarch, nor the *Quid tunc* or the *ictus oculi* of the *Dies Irae*. Instead he quoted a tangential passage about hieroglyphs from Diodorus,[3] where the eye is associated with justice, and the wings of the falcon with speed; and from this text he inferred that Alberti 'on the basis of Diodorus interpreted the eye as *iustitiae servator*, the flight of the falcon as *res cito facta*, the whole therefore as the ever-present possibility of his being called before the judgment-seat of God. It conveys the symbolic warning always to remember "what then", and does not allude, as has been supposed, to Alberti's scientific accomplishments.'[4]

The case proves that the image has an inherent eloquence, that it speaks the universal language of the imagination,[5] but that, like the lovers' emblems in Politian, it was 'meant to be understood by the lovers only, and exercise the conjectures of others in vain.'[6] Perhaps the hope Alberti entertained with regard to these images was not quite

[1] Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* II, xi, 26; but also Virgil, *Aeneid* IV, 543, *Eclogues* X, 38; Horace, *Satires* II, iii, 230; also Terence, *Eunuch* II, iii, 47, etc.

[2] On the phrase *in ictu oculi* as applied to the Last Judgment by mediaeval writers, see Mâle, *L'art religieux du XIII^e siècle en France* (1931), pp. 377 f.

[3] *Bibliotheca historica* III, iv.

[4] *Loc. cit.* Giehlow quotes and illustrates a gnostic seal discussed by Winckelmann, which shows a combination of eye, wings, and arm. While it is doubtful whether Alberti knew this object, Winckelmann's wording suggests that, like Alberti, he made use of Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 51 (*Moralia* 371E), as quoted above, p. 186.

[5] It will be asked why bother about finding the exactly relevant texts if it is possible to grasp the correct meaning of an image without knowing them. An answer is given by the history of Giehlow's interpretation which, although essentially right, failed to gain universal acceptance. Historical texts are needed not so much for the discovery of a symbolic meaning as for its conclusive demonstration.

[6] See above, p. 137.

so ill-founded as has been supposed. 'All over the world', he thought, 'they would be easily understood by experienced men (*a peritis viris*), to whom alone the noblest subjects should be communicated.'[1]

On the whole this 'conceited' art has not met with much sympathy from experienced men. Mr E. M. Forster, for example, has said that if a work of art parades a mystifying element, it is to that extent not a work of art, 'not an immortal Muse but a Sphinx who dies as soon as her riddles are answered.'[2] Certainly there are symbols which fit this admirable description. They disturb us as long as we do not understand them, and bore us as soon as we do. The winged eyes and ears that flutter around an Allegory of Fame by Filarete, who associated them with the 'winged words' of Homer, are a good example of what Mr Forster means.[3] But Alberti's winged eye is a case to the contrary. It shows that a great symbol is the reverse of a sphinx; it is more alive when its riddle is answered.

[1] *De re aedificatoria* VIII, iv.

[2] 'The Raison d'Être of Criticism in the Arts', in *Music and Criticism*, ed. R. French (1948), p. 26.

[3] M. Lazzaroni and A. Muñoz, *Filarete* (1908), pl. xiii, 5.

CONCLUSION

AN OBSERVATION ON METHOD

Without allowing for a certain ingredient of deliberate paradox, which qualified the imitation of antiquity by Renaissance humanists, we might misjudge altogether the atmosphere in which the pagan mysteries were revived. They were sponsored by men of letters who had learned from Plato that the deepest things are best spoken of in a tone of irony. 'Shall we, after the manner of Homer, pray the Muses to tell us how discord first arose? Shall we imagine them in solemn mockery, to play and jest with us as if we were children, and to address us in a lofty tragic vein, making believe to be in earnest?' (*Republic* 545–7). Lucian, Apuleius, even Plutarch had chattered of mysteries in a mocking tone. Their literary manner was admired and copied not only by professional stylists like Aldus, Erasmus, Aleander, and More,—it was adopted also in the philosophical schools. *Serio ludere* was a methodical maxim of Cusanus, Ficino, Pico, Calcagnini—not to mention Bocchi, who introduced the very phrase into the title of his *Symbolicae quaestiones*: 'quas serio ludebat'.[1]

It may be also remembered in this context that the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius was first published, in 1469, as a compendium of Platonic philosophy.[2] The preface by Giovanni Andrea de Bussi, who was a disciple of Cusanus, contained eulogies of Bessarion as a defender of Plato, and of Cusanus as an explorer of Proclus's Theology. Beroaldus's commentary on the *Golden Ass* resumed these reflections by quoting from Plato, Proclus, and Origen in order to explain the author's intention and design (*scriptoris intentio atque consilium*). 'And it appears that under that mystical cover, being deeply versed in Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy, he set forth the dogmas of both these

[1] Cf. Ficino, *In Parmenidem* (Prooemium), *Opera*, p. 1137: 'Pythagorae, Socratisque et Platonis mos erat, ubique divina mysteria figuris involucrisque obtegere, . . . iocari serio, et studiosissime ludere.' In Cusanus, *De ludo globi*, cf. *Opera* I (1514), fol. 159^{v}, the idea was put into verse: 'Luditur hic ludus; sed non pueriliter, at sic / Lusit ut orbe novo sancta sophia deo . . . / Sic omnes lusere pii: Dionysius et qui / Increpuit magno mystica verba sono', presumably not by Cusanus himself but, as Fiorentino surmises (*op. cit.*, p. 121), by De Bussi.

[2] *Lucii Apuleii Platonici Madaurensis Philosophi Metamorphoseos Liber ac nonnulla alia opuscula eiusdem.* . . . Here quoted from the edition of 1500.

masters, and conveyed the lessons of palingenesis and metempsychosis, that is, of regeneration and transmutation, through the disguise of that ludicrous story.'[1]

Serio ludere might also stand as a motto over a chapter which I have not attempted to write, and the omission of which may help to demonstrate the incompleteness of my observations on pagan mysteries: I have said nothing of the revival of ancient *grottesche*. With their sprawling ornaments, for which Giovanni da Udine had rediscovered the ancient stucco technique, Michelangelo intended to decorate the upper zone of the Medici Chapel. They were regarded by the Renaissance as the classical style for burial and mystery chambers. In their flimsy grace and inconsequence they gave rise to Raphael's paradox—religious *logge*. Addressing the devout in a foolish spirit, these calculated freaks represented to perfection what Pico della Mirandola had defined as the Orphic disguise: the art of interweaving the divine secrets with the fabric of fables, so that anyone reading those hymns 'would think they contained nothing but the sheerest tales and trifles', *nihil subesse credat praeter fabellas nugasque meracissimas*.

While the extravagance of mystical imagery is easiest to detect in this fantastical art, it is rarely absent from the more solemn Renaissance mythologies, those composed in a heroic, tragic, or sentimental style. A myth, it may be well to remember, was defined as 'a mendacious discourse figuring the truth'.[2] And whatever the merits of a robust common sense in the interpretation of images, it is fallacious, as Cumont observed, to trust 'probability in a region of ideas where the improbable is often the attested fact'.

There are historians, many of them admirable, who stress the importance of the commonplace in history. Their work is salutary and indispensable, because the commonplace is a relentless force. But in so far as their method is specially contrived to examine that particular subject, it is not suited to deal with the exceptional in history, the power of which should perhaps also not be underrated. In a perfect study, both aspects should be present; and it is one of the many weaknesses of this book that, except in one or two cases, it does not show how an adventurous proposition sinks to a platitude, and how genius is engulfed by complacency or inertia. For every one instance in which the interpretation of an image required a careful reading of Plotinus or Pico della Mirandola, I should have quoted several which can be resolved with the use of a common index. But in so far as we are forced to select, it would seem that to choose the exceptional for study is, in the long run, the smaller risk. An eminent iconographer who preferred the opposite course, discovered that 'the symbolical creations of geniuses

[1] *Philippi Beroaldi in Commentarios Apuleianos praefatio* (1516), fol. a iii^{v}.

[2] Μῦθος ἐστὶ λόγος ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν, Theon, *Progymnasmata* III, quoted by Cumont, *Symbolisme funéraire*, p. 3.—Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionis* I, ii, 7, 'modus per figmentum vera referendi'.

are unfortunately harder to nail down to a definite subject than the allegorical inventions of minor artists.' If this be so, there is something wrong with the manner of nailing down. A method which fits the small work but not the great, has obviously started at the wrong end. In geometry, if I may use a remote comparison, it is possible to arrive at Euclidean parallels by reducing the curvature of a non-Euclidean space to zero, but it is impossible to arrive at a non-Euclidean space by starting out with Euclidean parallels. In the same way, it seems to be a lesson of history that the commonplace may be understood as a reduction of the exceptional, but that the exceptional cannot be understood by amplifying the commonplace. Both logically and causally the exceptional is crucial, because it introduces (however strange that may sound) the more comprehensive category. That this relation is irreversible should be an axiom in any study of art. In the present case it is offered as an apology for a book devoted to a manifest eccentricity.

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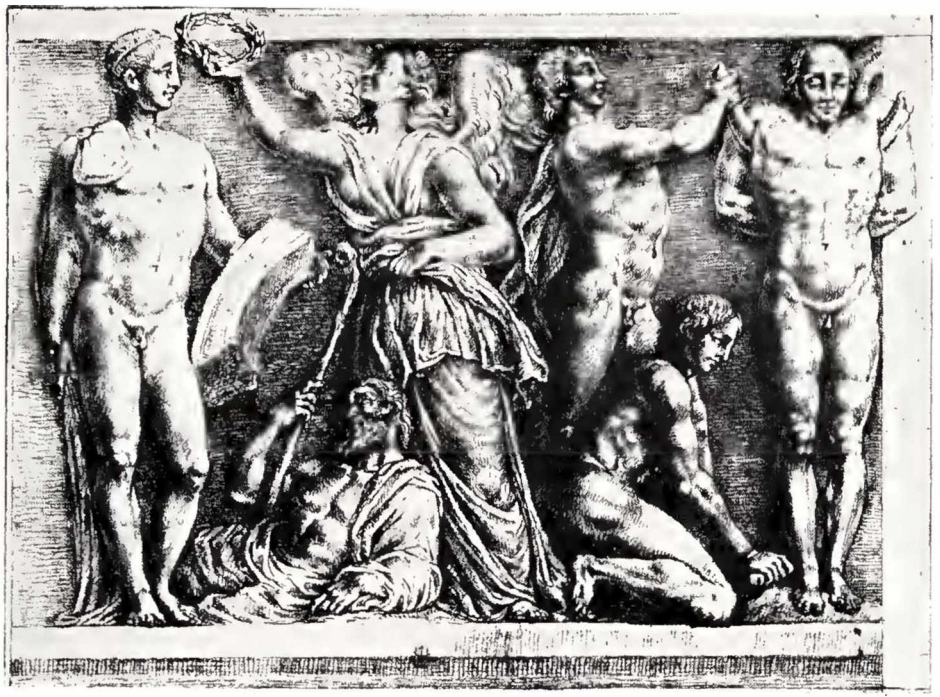

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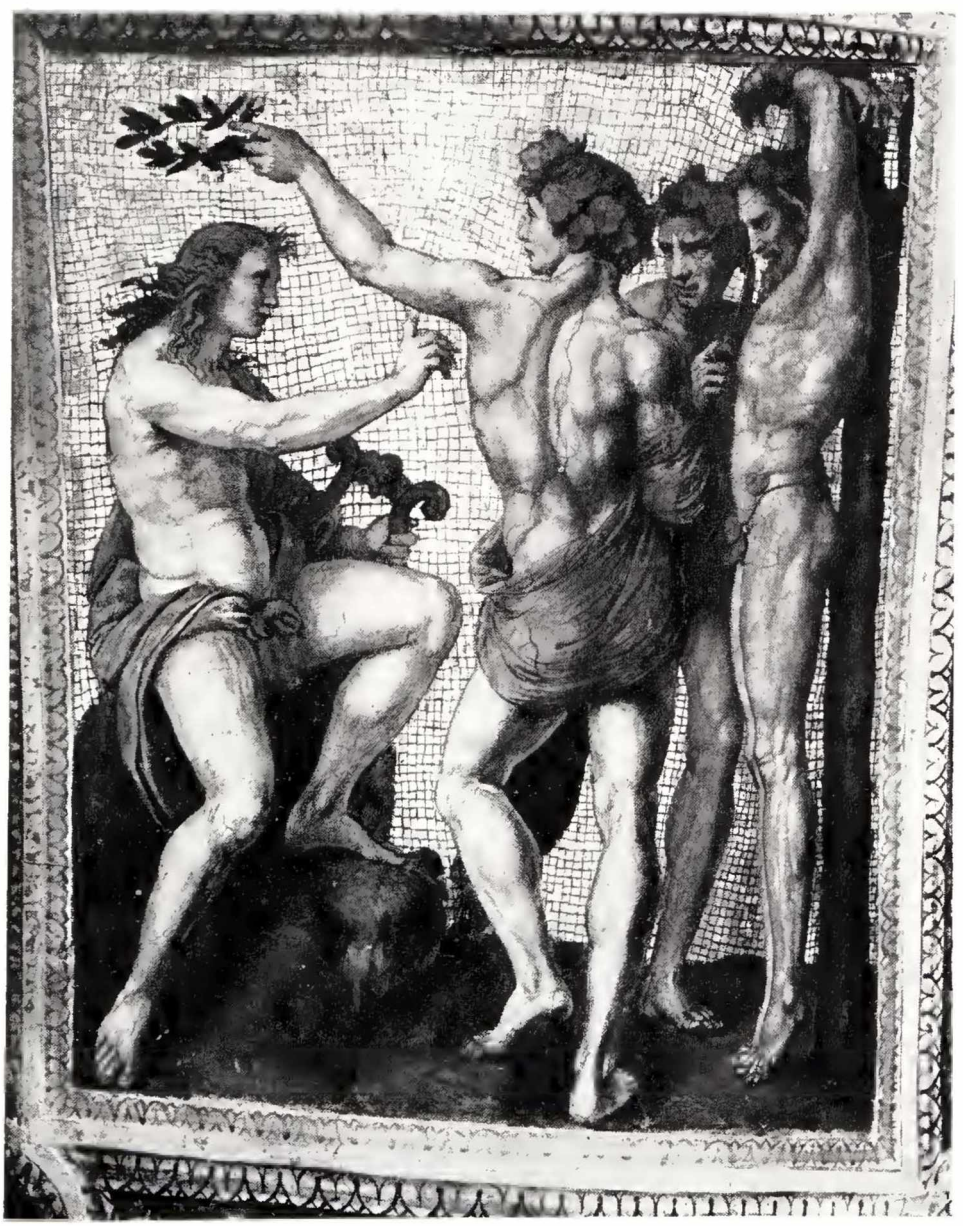

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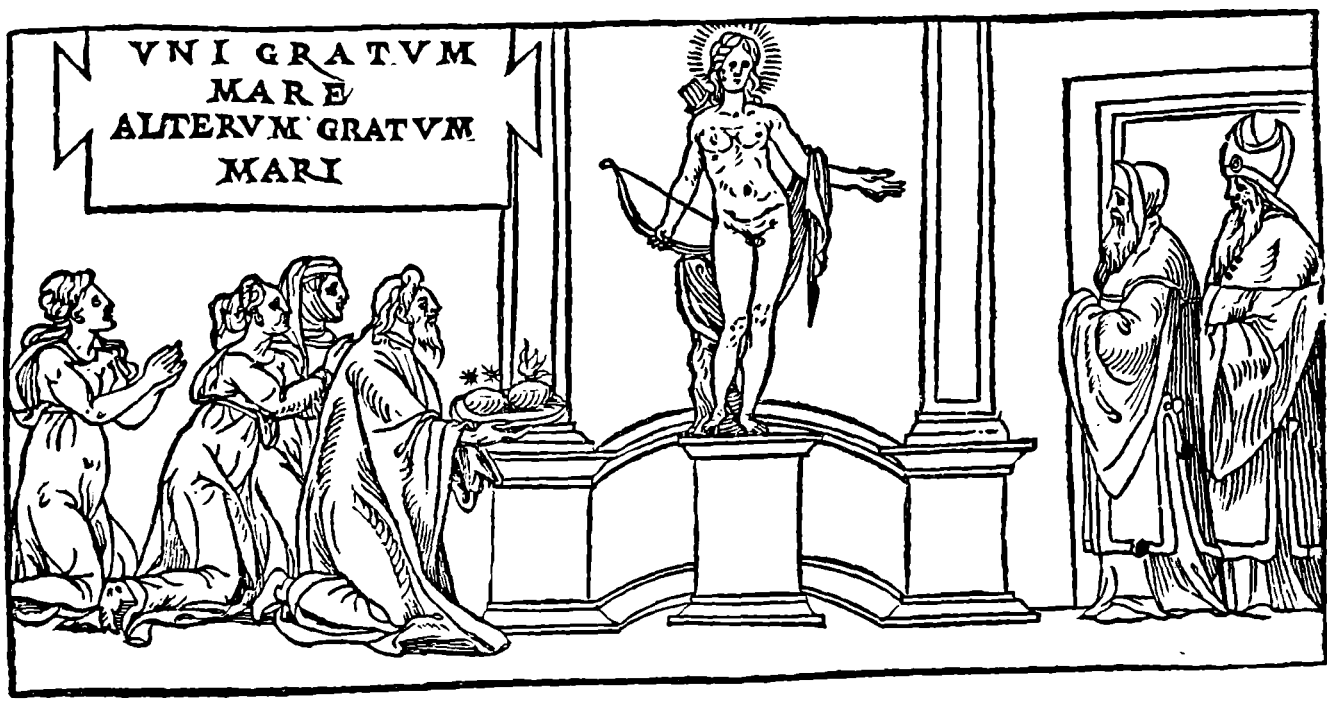

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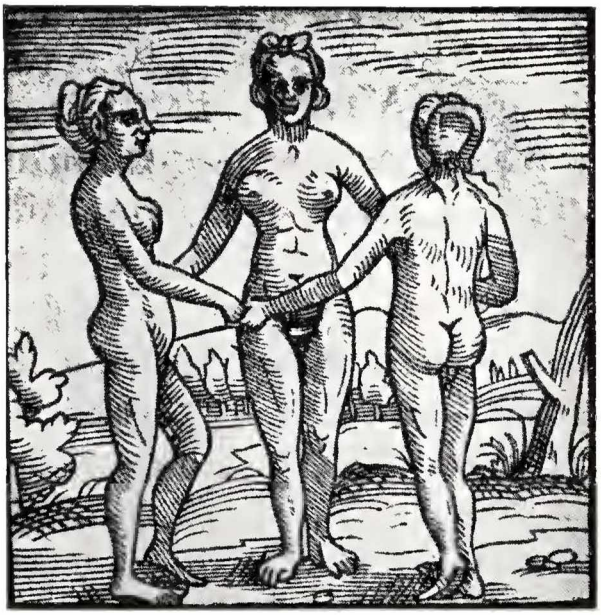

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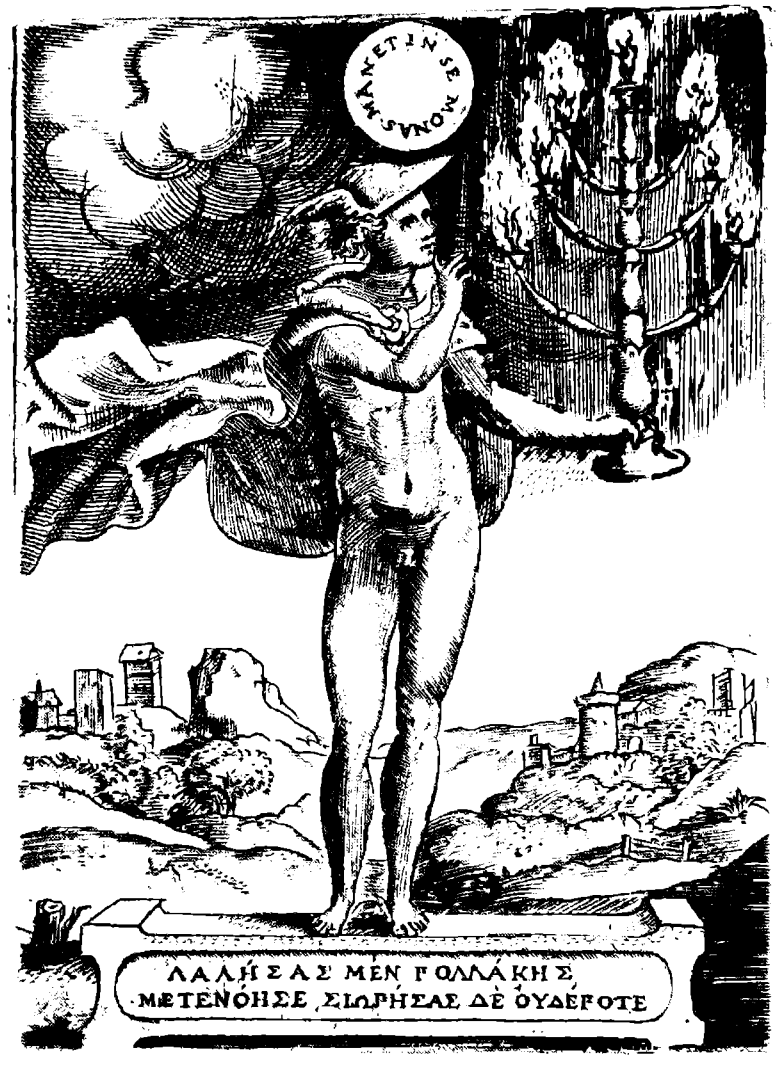

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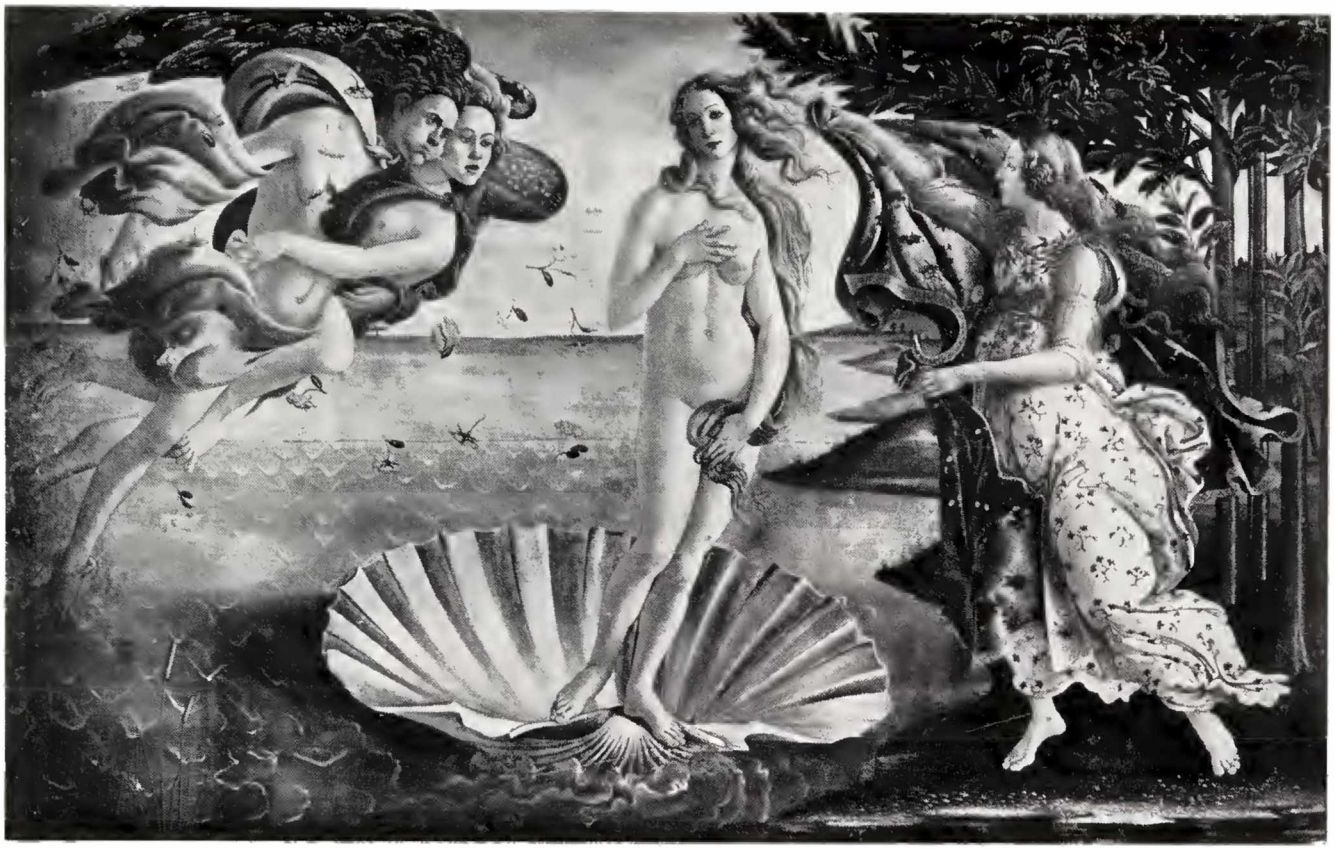

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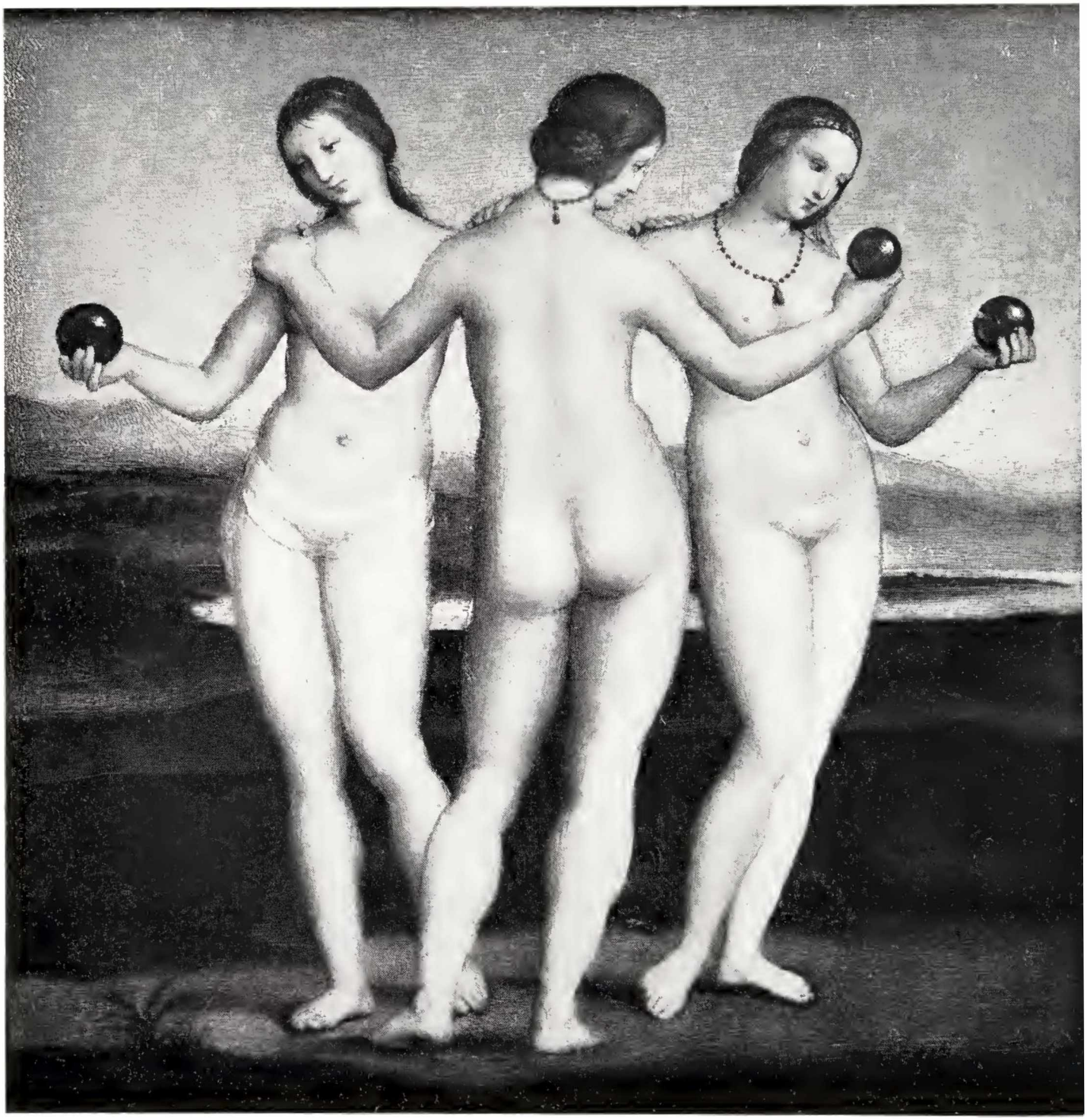

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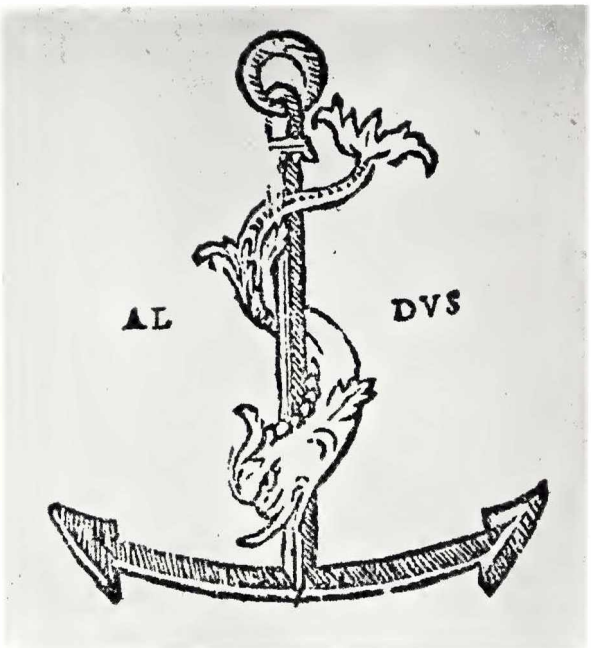

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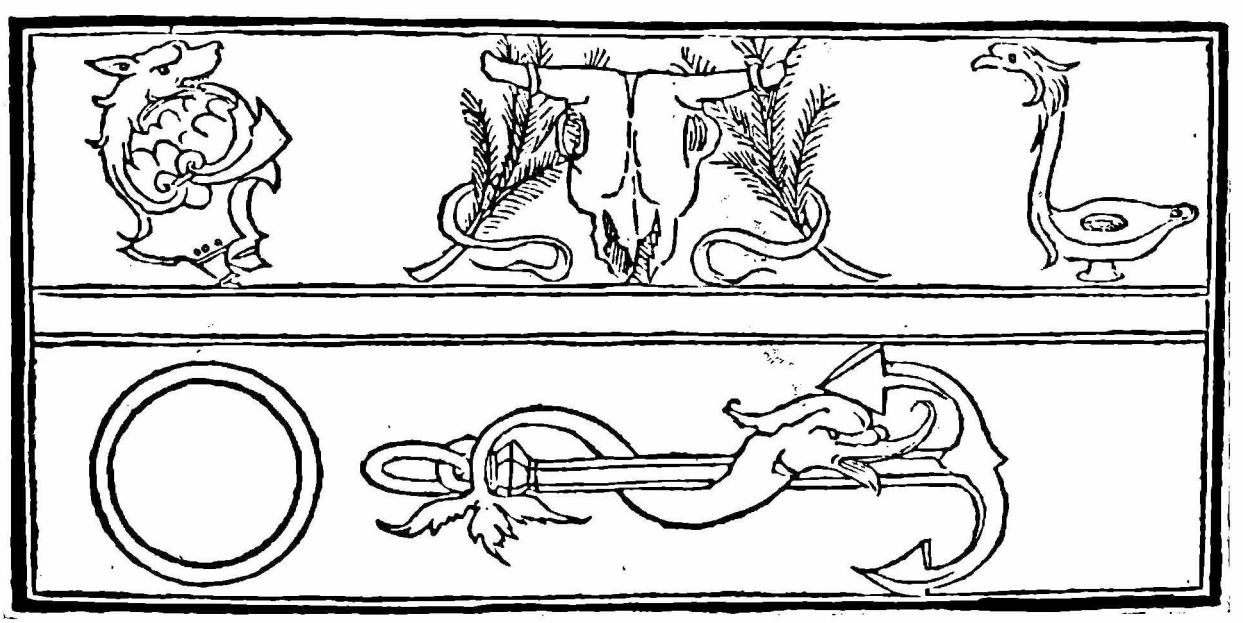

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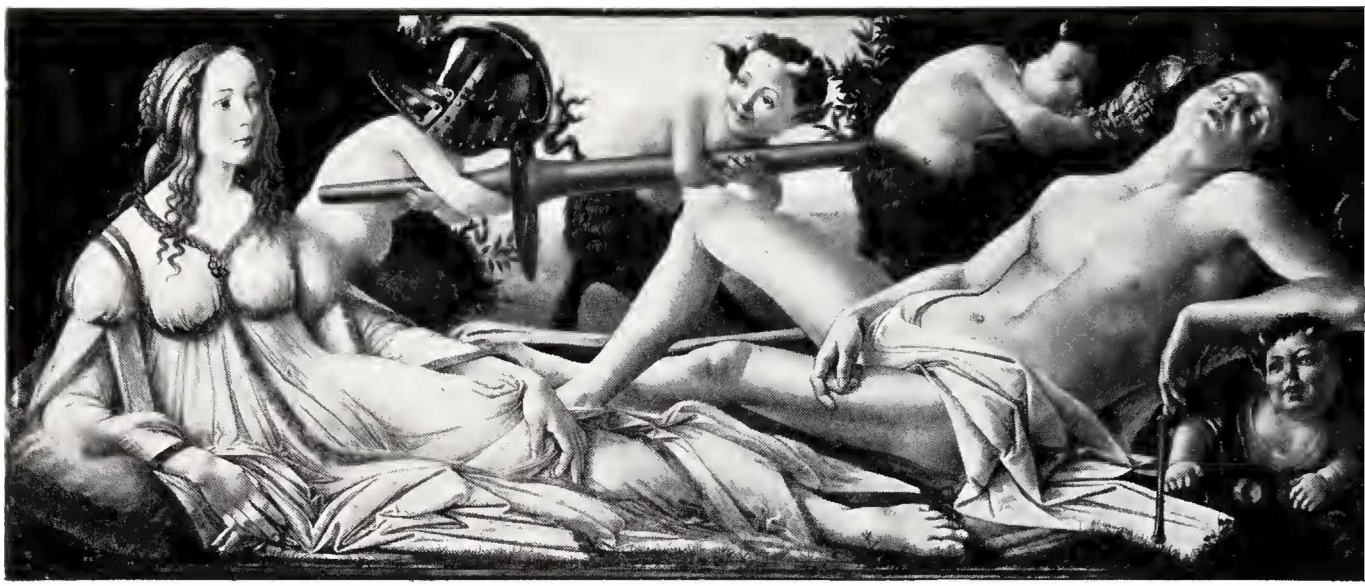

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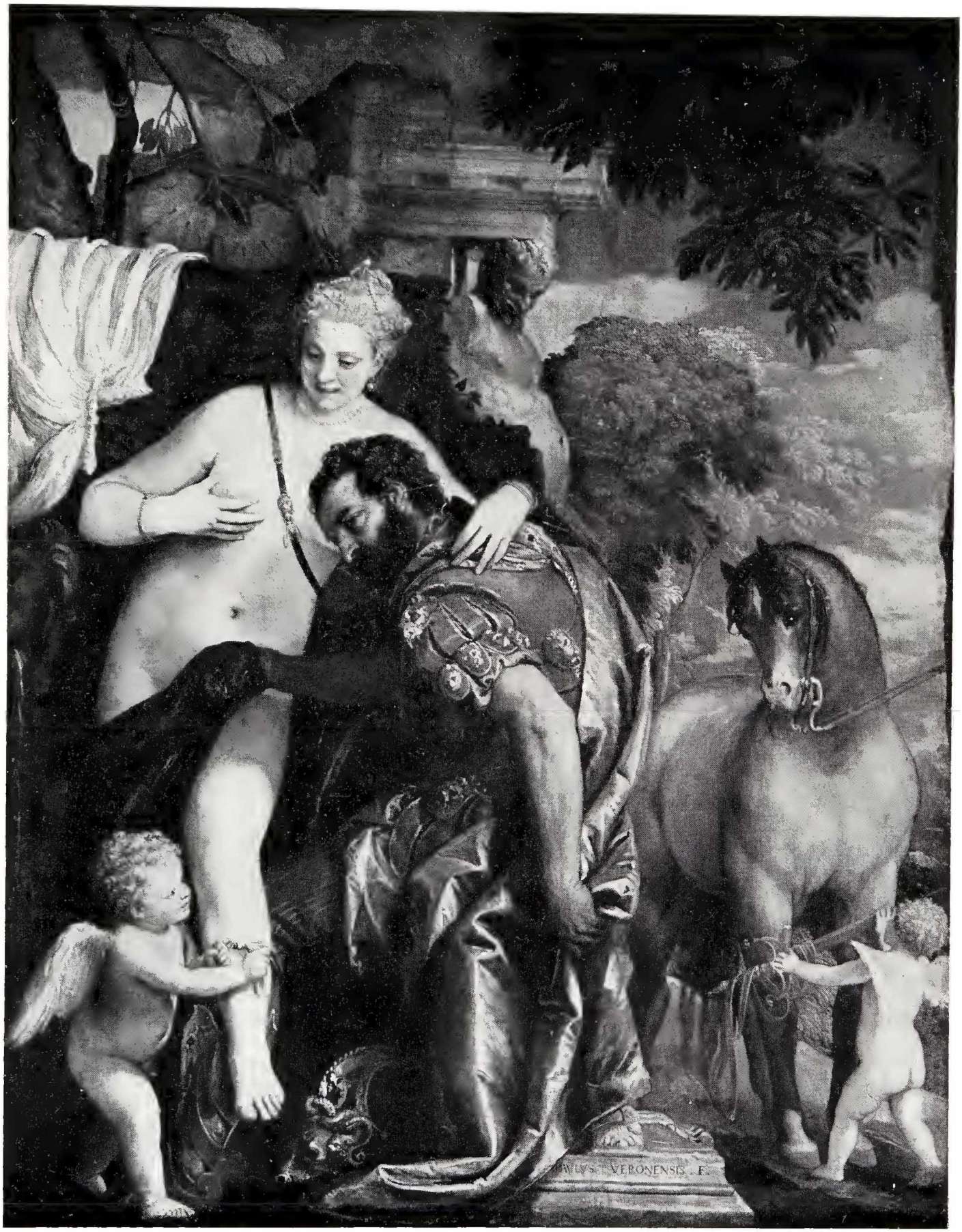

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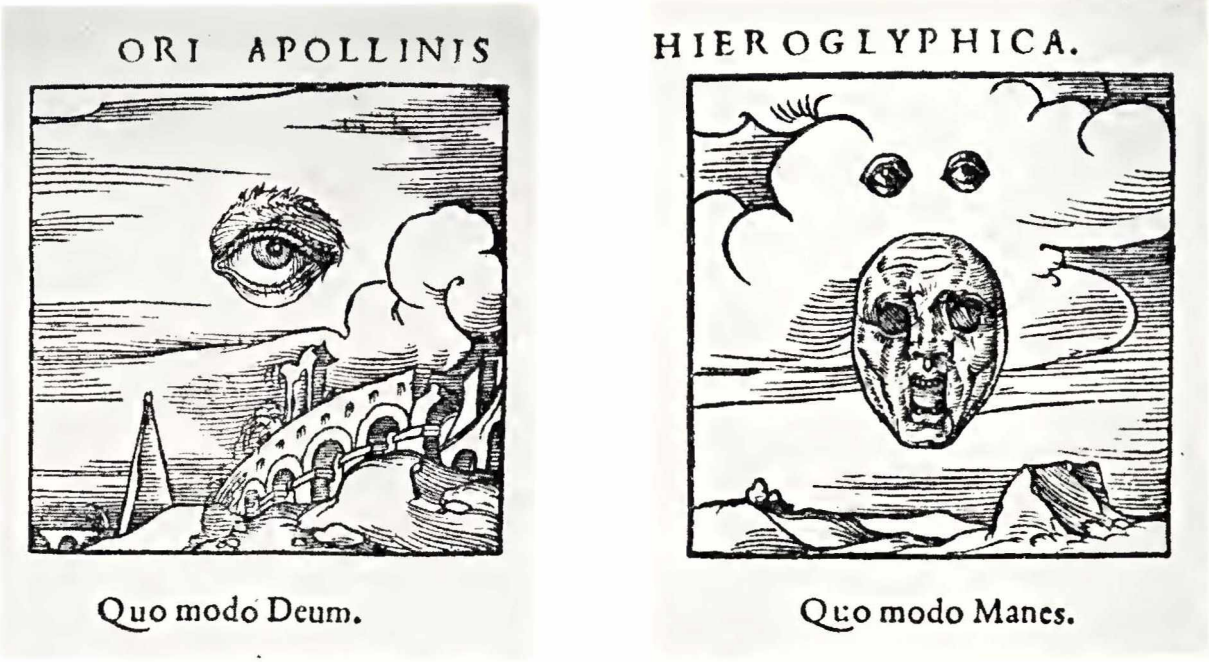

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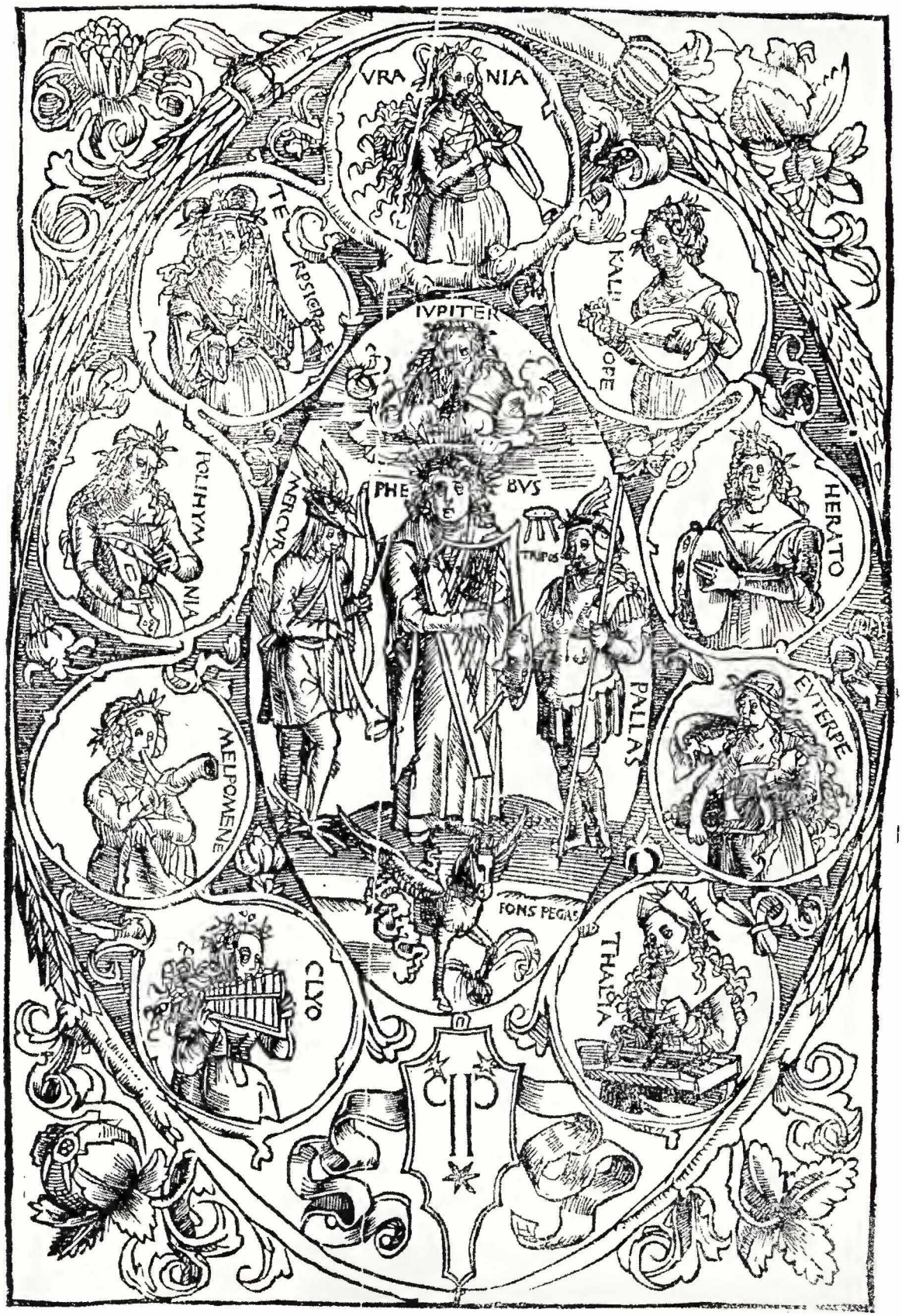

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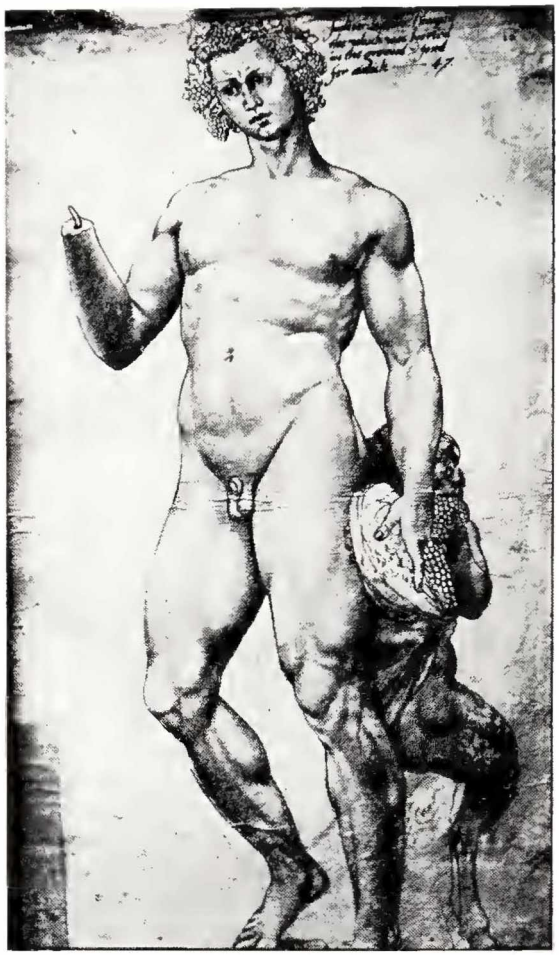

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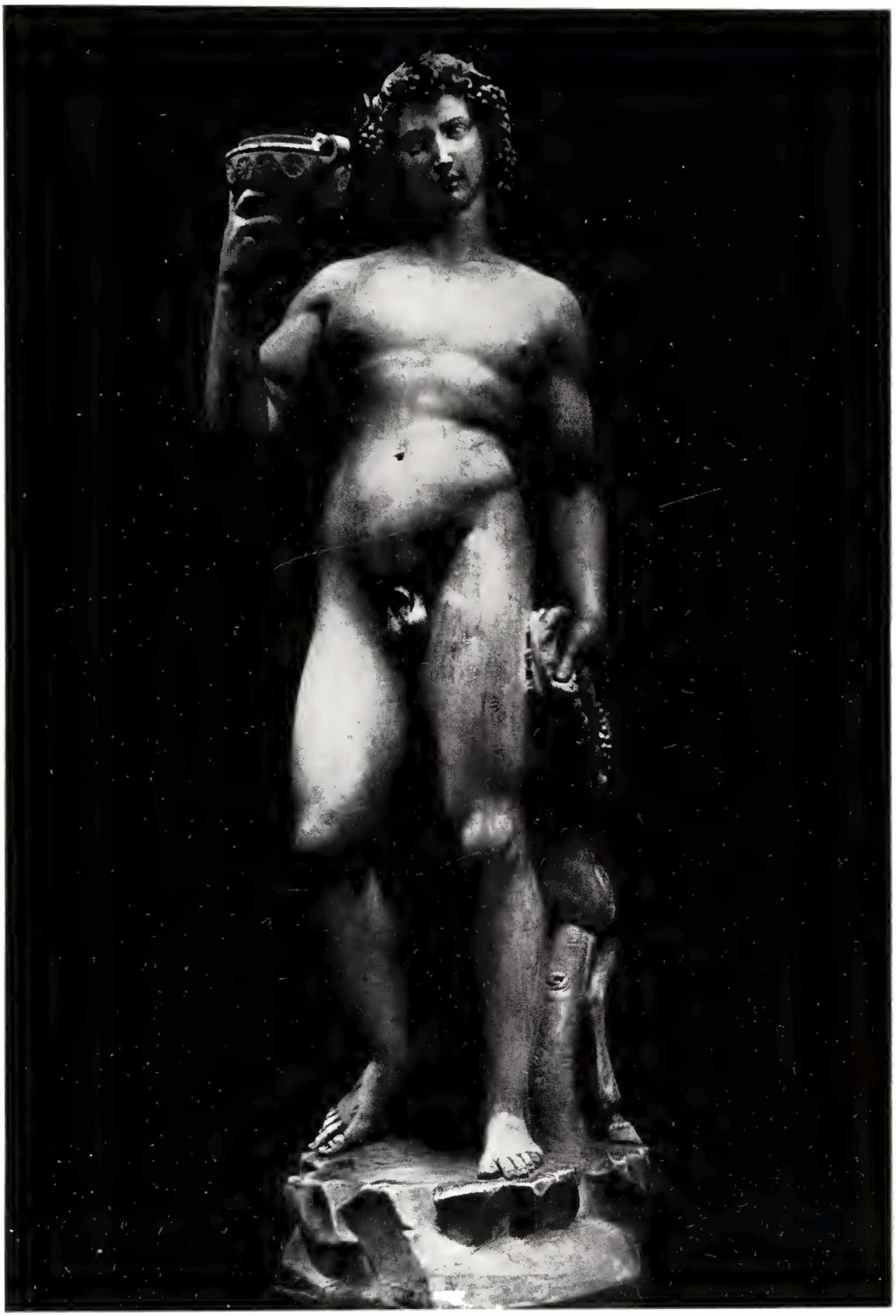

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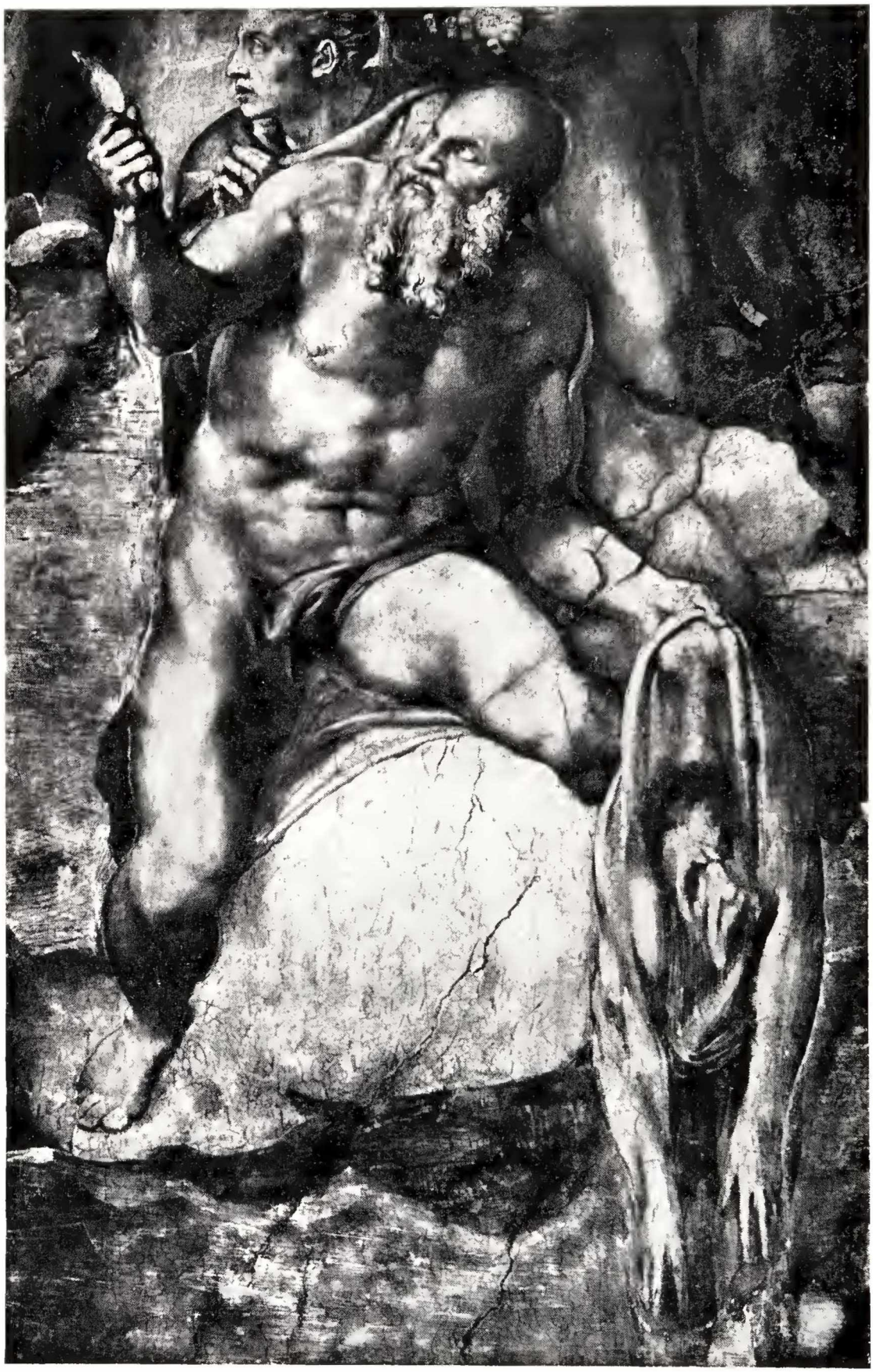

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